

Yours Always  
Edmund Eschepard

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# DOLLY,

## THE YOUNG WIDDER UP TO FELDER'S.

BY  
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AUTHOR OF THE "FARMIN' EDITOR'S SKETCHES."



Toronto:  
ROSE PUBLISHING COMPANY.

1886.

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Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred  
and eighty-six, by HUNTER, Ross & Co., in the office of the Minister of Agriculture

## PREFACE.

MY FRIEND :

The little story I have written for you has been the playmate of my fancy for a good many weeks. The people of whom I tell have sat around my desk in the quiet midnight hours after I left my office and found the solitude of my little room at home. It has been one of my few pleasures to be merry and sad, gay and sorrowful with these dream-land friends, otherwise the story would never have been written. It will not require a critical reader to discover that the actual work of writing has been done hurriedly, very often carelessly, and the literary style and skill may justly meet with unfavorable comment, but I ask you to remember that I have given you the story because the writing of it amused me, because it carried me back to old times, and I hope that the reading of it will interest you for the same or some other reason. Among the many cares of publishing a daily newspaper and trying to build up a popular weekly, there are but few sunshiny places, and those are often the hours when we live within ourselves and frolic with the creatures of our fancy. Libel suits, infuriated subscribers, and slow-paying advertisers, and the thousand vexations which worry those who go out to sea in the shakey ship of journalism have all been mine, and very unpleasant incidents have crowded themselves into my real life, while I have been trying to materialize my fleeting fancies into a story. But the farm sketches I have given you for the past two years and the little village story to which I now introduce you, have often led me back to the old farm house, and I have heard the ripened grain rustling in the fields as it did when the night winds sighed around the old home and moved the peach boughs that tapped against the attic window, by which I slept. To bring back these recollections, I have let my fancy freely play, and the comings and goings of these memories have been those of the shuttle

which has woven the warp of truth and the woof of fancy into a story.

Good stories are said to have a moral, and clever ones must have a great idea running through their pages. I believe in the goodness, fidelity, and truth of women, and, comprehending the suspicion and pride of the ordinary man, have tried to point out how trifles in the jealous or even watchful mind build up awful images of perfidy and distrust. I have imagined, too, that the tattle and petty slander, such as, from the first day of my hero's arrival in Fellersburg, began to make him distrust Dolly, and finally led to the tragedy which separated their lives, may teach thoughtless people to take care lest their idle words may lodge poisoned arrows in a gentle heart.

It is but a story. If you want to find pleasure in the naturalism of it, read it slowly and find where it tells the inner truth. The first half of it may be very dull to those in whose memory the slow-moving village days recall no similar chapters in their own lives, but the last half will, in its exciting tragedy, perhaps, justify the character sketches which lead up and are the key to it. This little story was written for the readers of THE WEEKLY NEWS—for those who live, not in towns and cities, but amidst the glories of nature and the toils of the field. It will be quite a long story, and I hope that even when the summer comes, and the blossoms grow into fruit, and the bees drone through the clover, and the robins teach their baby birds to fly, and the great yellow grain fields slumber through the Sabbath of the harvest, that my little "Dolly" will be remembered with pleasure, and may win smiles and tears from those who are neither too proud to feel the sorrows of a maiden as she learns life's lessons, nor too cynical to share in the woes of a hapless lover as he studies that strange problem—a woman's heart.

Dear reader, I now toss into your lap my artless bouquet of corn-blossoms.

Yours Always,

EDMUND E. SHEPPARD.



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE STAGE DRIVER.

"Hain't nuthin' the matter with the weather?" remarked the driver, inquiry.

"No, the weather is all right," replied passenger, shortly.

There was a considerable pause, and passenger who sat beside the stage never seemed anxious that it should come. Old Humstir felt differently. He hated to talk. He had driven the ~~one~~ for twenty-three years, and felt privileged to make inquiries which he ~~ought~~ have deemed indecorous if addressed himself. By profession he was a hotel-keeper, and the carrier of Her Majesty's ~~one~~ between an Ontario railway station, which it is unnecessary to name, and Milton, which was the terminus of Hum-

stir's royal mail line of one stage and two spavined horses. He was a tall man, a large man and a drinking man, who prided himself that no one could ever accuse him of having refused to have a drink. Humstir's age was indefinite. According to his own conflicting statements, he was seventy-nine, though he looked young for sixty. The few regular passengers who took pains to connect "Old Humstir's" stories and adventures as related by himself found that he must have passed through the very extraordinary trials of between six and seven hundred years. In fact Humstir was a notorious, and sometimes interesting and picturesque, liar, who sought to shorten the trip for his passengers by asking questions and relating his own adventures. At every wayside tavern on his fifteen-mile trip he stopped and watered his horses and drank with those who were reckless enough to treat, but he had never been known to spend a cent. His long black curly locks, unmixed with grey, hung down over his collar, and the coat gave silent but shining evidence that Humstir, with a remnant of youthful foppishness, was addicted to buttering his hair. His thirst for liquor was nothing compared to his

thirst for knowledge of the private affairs of his passengers, and any stranger who rode with him had either to tell his own family history or listen to the adventures of that veteran tattler.



"No, there hain't nothin' the matter with the weather," remarked Humstir, reflectively.

The passenger took no notice.

"How was the weather up in your deestrick when you left?" inquired the stage driver, raising his voice and reaching forward to lap his whip around the nigh horse's ear.

"All right," answered the passenger wearily, as he turned his back on his questioner.

"Let's see," soliloquized Humstir. "Where did you say you cum frum."

No answer.

"As I was a-sayin' jest now, I've fergotten whar you said you cum frum," continued Humstir, raising his voice and nudging his front passenger.

"I didn't say."

"No, I guess ye didn't. Cum to think of it mebbe ye didn't. When we was into the Corners you was tellin' me that you was agoin' a little further'n Belkton, but I disremember as to whar you said you was frum. You was tellin' me you have relations tharabouts, wan't you?"

The passenger turned and looked at Humstir, and the old man, avoiding the contemptuous glance, extended his whip towards the wayside field, and "guessed them was as fine steers as he'd seen anywhere." This prevented any friction, but still the passenger failed to talk.

"Dog-gone ye, git along thar, or I'll skin ye. Yes I will! dang me ef I don't."

These violent words were accompanied by a few lazy switches of the whip. "Ye

sed you was a-doin' up to Johnson's, didn't ye?"

"No."

Pause of three minutes, and then Humstir, turning to the young woman in the next seat—"Bin quite a spell since ye rid with me afore."

"Yes; I've bin away. Jest gettin' back. Bin over to Michigan. I was seein' Hiram's folks. They're doin' well, too. Hiram's is."

"So I've heer'n; so I've heer'n. See, who was it Hiram married?"

"Ann Klimmer—you know, Peter Klimmer's girl. Do you guess I'll get a chance home from Belkton to-night? My folks haint expectin' me."

Old Humstir had planned his campaign cleverly and now turned the talkative woman on his silent passenger by saying, "This gentleman here is goin' your way—as fur as I kin gather, Mebbe if you ask him he'll tell you wharabouts he's goin' to lite."

Without further introduction she asked the front passenger what chance there'd be of "gettin' a lift as fur as Seth Hill's on the town line, near the ninth?"

The young man was too gallant to refuse a reply and politely expressed his entire ignorance of the locality.

"If you'd tell me where you're goin' I guess mebbe I'd know whether we're goin' in the same direction or not?"

The young man said he was going to Fellersburg—

"Fellersburg!" joyfully exclaimed the girl. "Why, I live within half a mile from there. Who's comin' to meet you?"

"Nobody—I intend to hire a horse and buggy if I can at the end of the stage line. I suppose I can?" he added, looking at the driver.

"Well, I should say you could, right at my hotel, and one of my boy's'll drive you over and tote this young woman, too, if yer agreeable. Visiting friends there, I s'pose?"

"No; I am a stranger here."

"Plyin' fur the Fellersburg school, mebbe? A young feller rode down with me last night and he said he was after it. Mebbe you're too late."

The young man was more interested now, and said the trustees had promised by letter to wait till he saw them before selecting a teacher.

"Why, my father's one of the trustees," eagerly broke in the young woman. "Him and Peter Klimmer and Jo Feller, and I'm sure my father'll be fur you."

The front passenger turned his steady, dark eyes on the face of the impulsive girl, who blushed like a red, red rose to think that she'd betrayed her admiration

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for the stranger. "I thank you—Miss Hill, I presume?"

"Yes, sir," blushed the girl. "I don't go to school any more."

The young man now smiled as he grasped the idea of this artless explanation—that her admiration would not embarrass him in the school room—and looking up she saw that she had again been too

"I'll be glad to drive you home, Miss Hill, as our way is together."

"Thank you—sir," she added with an unusual effort at reserve and strict propriety.

She was a pretty girl, and as she turned her head and gazed out over the fields, the schoolmaster noticed that her race was not only sweet but honest and her blushes and confusion showed that she was modest. He looked at the rest of the tired passengers and wondered if they were all to be his neighbors. They were joining in a discussion with old Humstir as to the distance between Belkton and Fellersburg, and about how long it would take the schoolmaster to make the trip. The uncommunicative stranger was surprised to see the interest felt in his movements, and ascribing it to their good nature, endeavored to be pleasant.

Old Humstir saw his advantage when the stranger inquired the size of Fellersburg, and leaning forward gave the nigh horse a couple of cracks with the whip and remarked: "Git along, thar, dod-rot ye, or I'll kill ye. Yes, I will; I will, be gosh." He took a fresh chew of plug, put his feet on the dashboard, and commenced in a loud, explanatory tone. The stranger saw he had made a mistake, but it was too late to stop Humstir's tongue.

"Well, young feller, Fellersburg haint nigh as big as New York. Like enough it haint as big as whar you'r from—"

Slight pause. Young man volunteers no information, but is aware that the passengers are all listening.

"Where air you frum?" demanded Humstir, leaning over the wheel to expostorate, and again avoiding the young man's disgusted look.

"I've been living in Toronto lately."

"Goin' to college, like enuff?"

"Yes; I've been studying medicine," coldly admitted the stranger.

"A heap of young fellers frum around Fellersburg've been off studyin' doct'rin'. Good many of them have gone to the States. Mebbe you're a Yankee yerself?" resumed the indefatigable bore.

"Yes, I was born in York state."

"Then you'll suit Jo Felder, you will, be gosh. He favors Yankees. Yes, he does, be gosh. He's got some Pennsyl-

vania Dutch in him. Same here. I cum from Dutch stock over'n York state. I left there in—but I say, young feller, how old would you reckon I am?"

Without looking at his inquisitor the passenger carelessly suggested, "Fifty or sixty."

"Thar ye air, thar ye air," said Humstir, turning triumphantly to his load, "he says fifty or sixty, and you all know I'm past eighty-five if I'm half a day."

The passengers acknowledged that they had often heard him say that he was even more than that. The front passenger endeavored to stem the tide by asking a few questions of the others, and reminding the driver that he hadn't told him the size of Fellersburg.

"No, I didn't, did I. No, I didn't, be gosh. Mebby thar's twenty houses, mebby thar hain't more'n fifteen, but it is a thick settlement, haint it, Jinny?"

The pretty girl answered that there were sixteen houses, "not includin' Peter Klimmer's and Jo Felder's, wholived out'n the village about sixty rod."

Humstir resumed: "Jo Felder's the boss of that burg. Yes, he is. He is, be gosh. What he says, runs the deestrect. It does, begosh. Jo's pretty well fixed, and a danged decent feller. He is, begosh. Got a pretty gurl, too—has, begosh. I heerd she was runnin' with Tommy Watson—"

Humstir turned to "Jinny" Hill for corroborative evidence, and the front passenger watched her face as she replied:

"Yes, and taint none to her credit, nuther." Her face darkened with jealousy, and the stranger wondered whether it was of Felder's daughter or "Tommy Watson."

"Tommy's a hard case, if what I've heern be true—great after wimmin," continued Humstir, with an explanatory wave of his whip. "I'm danged if I can understand what Jo allows it fur, but mebbe he knows whether it's best. Mebbe he duz. Like enuf he duz, begosh."

The stranger watched to see if Miss Hill rose to the defence of Tommy, and the young woman not offering any palliation of Tommy's faults, he concluded that Jo Felder's daughter was probably Miss Jenny's sore point.

"Must be purty sure of the situavation when ye bring yer trunk along," remarked Humstir.

The steady eyes caught Humstir's glance as the stranger replied: "Yes, I generally get what I go after."

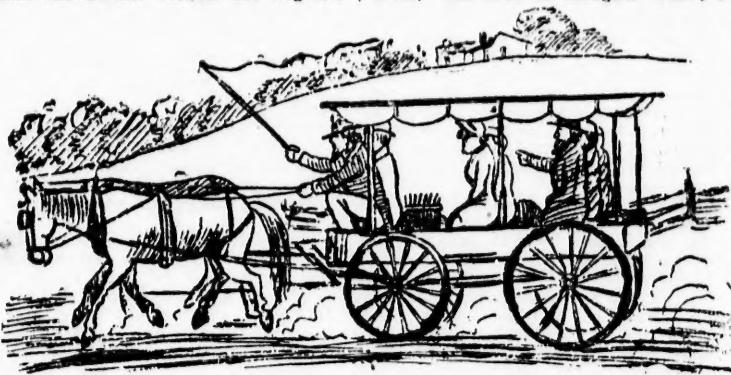
All further inquiries and insinuations were in vain. The stranger would talk no more, and his fellow-passengers, as they listened to Humstir's vain attempts to elicit further information, at once de-

cided that the dark and self-possessed young man on the front seat had something to conceal, and was in fact a dangerous if not a disreputable character. Jenny Hill alone differed in her conclusions, and her soft little heart felt sure that he must be a high-born gentleman and a person of great importance, or he would never have dared to defy old Humstir and refuse to answer that merciless inquisitor's questions. More than that he was sad as well as stern looking, and his easy manners and city-made clothes stamped him as a gentleman in her eyes. Unconscious of her scrutiny, he gazed steadily before him, his large, aquiline nose and proud, firm mouth bespeaking a strength of character which decided quickly, while his penetrating eyes and straight, blue-black hair, erect carriage and wiry frame suggested the remorseless Indian who neither forgets nor forgives.

asked her if she was expecting anyone to meet her. She said no and he volunteered to drive her home, but she proudly declined and said "the gentleman" was going to drive her home.

Lem looked at "the gentleman" with a scowl and led the horses to the barn.

His father told him to hitch "Fly" to the buggy "fur a man," and went in the bar. Very soon a horse and two-seated buggy came to the door, and the stranger helped Jenny up beside him, and with a boy to drive, set out for Fellersburg. The sun was getting low and the farmers who had thronged the stores and blacksmith shops through the day had gone home. As the buggy rattled down the hill and over the bridge and around the road which followed the hill-side the young man sighed, and looking out over the river, was lost in thought. Jenny fel-



That he was a man to inspire respect was proved by Humstir's silence, and for miles the stage rattled over the road, its oilcloth top flapping against the frame of the cover and the hot dust drifting in on the passengers, without a word being spoken. Humstir was offended, the passengers suspicious, Jenny Hill delighted with the prospect of the ride home, and the stranger unconcerned.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ROAD TO FELDERSBURG.

"Here we air, begosh," remarked Humstir, as he drew up before a yellowish-white hotel, with a red driving house and shed, which were a continuation of the tavern.

Lem Humstir, son of the proprietor, helped Jenny Hill to alight, and eagerly

hurt, and contrasted him with the young men who took her out driving, and tried so hard to please her wayward fancy. He had evidently forgotten that he had company, but as she looked at his face seemed almost forbidding in its determination and vengeful strength, and she was glad he was silent. The swaying of the buggy over a rough place threw her against him, and he turned and begged her pardon with a slow, mirthless smile that woke her soft little heart into sympathy with him at once. He gazed at her till she blushed and looked down, and then he said: "I'm rather a dull companion; I have been traveling since early morning and am very tired."

"So have I," said Jenny, "yet I don't feel tired, but then I'm so glad to be getting home. You can't feel glad and tired, can you?"

"I don't know, Miss Jenny. 'Bem

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Miss Jenny. 'Bea

tired' often comes over me, but I haven't had occasion to be glad for so long that I hardly remember how it feels."

"Doesn't it make you glad to see the crops looking so well, and to think that people will be well—off this fall? And see how lovely the river looks?"

The river was indeed lovely as it broadened into a little lake. The last rays of the summer sun sent long bars of light and shadow across the clear waters, the trees were reflected in the stream, a little boat with three children as its crew was floating down towards the village, the quail were whistling in the underbrush by the roadside, and everything spoke of peace.

"Do you know," said the sentimental Jenny, "that when I see the trees and sky reflected in the water like that, I think that heaven isn't so very far away after all."

Her companion turned to her and quoted banteringly, while he watched her face,

"I remember, I remember

The fir trees dark and high;  
I used to think their slender tops  
Were close against the sky;  
It was but childish ignorance,  
But now 'tis little joy  
To know I'm further off from heaven  
Than when I was a boy."

Her face reddened as she answered: "Well, maybe it's childish ignorance, but I'm not ashamed to try to think of heaven being near by, though men seem to think it's smart to laugh at good things and make out that they don't believe in heaven at all."

He saw that he had offended her, and said kindly: "Miss Hill, I was not laughing at you. I am as sorry as you are to think that the average man is further away from heaven than the boy. One who mixes with the world grows away from the idea of heaven, and as they depart from the quiet paths and homely faith they leave behind them the capacity for being 'glad' which you retain, and I have lost. Your idea is the idea of the poets. Perhaps you have heard the legend of Bregenz—it was a favorite recitation amongst my school mates?"

Jenny had never "heern it."

"Well, it gives your idea exactly, and he again quoted:

Gift round with rugged mountains  
The fair lake Constance lies;  
In her blue heart reflected,  
Shine back the starry skies;  
And watching each white cloudlet  
Float silently and slow.  
You think a piece of heaven  
Lies on the earth below!

As his deep voice repeated the musical

lines the flattered Jenny was watching the river below, thinking she had never heard anything so lovely nor met so clever a man.

He had the charm which every grave and reserved man possesses of exciting wonder and respect. People were always weaving little mysteries around him and investing him with romantic sorrows and wrongs, which but added interest to the riddle of whom he was and



why he was so loth to talk of himself or explain his fitful moods and sneering smiles and unprovokedly bitter words. Just now he undertook to please Jenny Hill and skilfully led her to tell him of the people around Feldersburg, about the peculiarities of the school and the trustees, and before they were near her home she was rattling away about everyone she knew.

"Peter Klimmer is the richest man in the township, but he is a hard drinker, and his boys, exceptin' Henry, who's livin' in Montana, is doin' bad. The Watsons pretend to be high-toned, and have had more schoolin' than the rest of us, but none of the girls or boys are married though the girls is old enough, some of them, goodness knows," and Jenny laughed. "I've heerd their place was mortgaged and that they'd never git it paid off, neither, but people has said that about them fur a long time because they try to put on sich style, and their farm haint as big as our'n nor as good land, neither."

"What about Felder's?" inquired the attentive listener, who saw that Jenny was leaving this important family out of her running commentary.

"Oh, they're nice folks and Mr. Felder is awfully easy with people, and I've heard he'll get sold out sometime if he don't quit backin' notes fur everybody that asks him." Jenny paused for an instant and then continued in a less pleasant tone, "You'll see Dolly Felder, and like enuff think she's the sweetest girl you ever saw. Nearly everybody says that of her, but I don't. She played a mean trick onto me onc't, and I hain't forgotten it nuther."

Jenny's grammar and pronunciation always fell off as she warmed up, and her companion again noticed that there was a considerable gulf fixed between Jenny Hill and Dolly Felder.

"What's the trouble between you and 'Dolly,' as you call her!?"

Jenny's eyes blazed for a minute, and she blushed and said in a low, spiteful voice, "She lied about me."

By this time they were at Seth Hill's gate, where a red-whiskered and uneasy man of about fifty helped Jenny out of the buggy and submitted to a hug and a kiss with a good deal of reluctance.

"How's Hiram's?" jerked out Seth.

"All well 'septin' 'Melia. She got a bad cold—"

The stranger had also alighted, and Jenny proceeded to introduce him. "This is the new school teacher, father. He came down on the stage with me, and hired a rig to bring us out—"

Briefly introducing himself as the applicant for the Fieldsburg school, the young man hoped Mr. Hill would meet with the other trustees next day and see if he would answer their requirements.

Mr. Hill guessed it wouldn't be necessary, as he was willin' to do what suited the others. He wa'nt hard to suit." The stranger insisted that it would be necessary to sign an agreement, and he would prefer to have it signed by all the trustees. Seth had been twisting uneasily about, and after promising to be on hand turned to "Jinny" and asked if she had any money. She gave him a dollar bill—what was left from her closely calculated expenses—and he in turn offered it to the departing visitor.

"I calculate I'd orter pay for half that rig fer bringin' Jinny home. Take it out'n that," he jerked. "I al'us want to do the straight thing by people."

The money was coldly but politely refused, and was restored with unconcealed willingness not to "Jinny's" pocket but to Seth's. "Gens' ye'd better go in and see your maw," said Seth to Jenny, who

was watching her departing companion "them cum out and help pail them cows. The stranger looked Jenny full in the face, raised his hat, said "good night," and went away remebering nothing except that Seth Hill had a pretty white farm house and orchard, and that Seth himself was a very awkward, uneasy man, with hands which had apparently remained un-washed since the last school-master was hired. But Jenny couldn't even enjoy herself answering questions and telling her folks about "Hiram's," and how the children looked and how many cows he had and the luck he'd had with his crops and slashin'. She went to bed in the upstairs room to dream of the handsome self-possessed stranger, and wondering what his name was.

### CHAPTER III.

#### JO. FELDER'S DOLLY.

"Where does Mr. Felder live?"

"Over yonder," replied a tall, thin man with chin whiskers, who was one of a dozen idlers in front of the grocery store and postoffice of Fieldsburg. The stranger's eye followed the direction of the extended finger, and saw a big white house with verandahs all around it, in the mid of an orchard. A great wooded hill sloped up behind it, the river flowing beside it, and no prettier home could be found in all Canada.

"I guess you must be strange to these parts, or you'd knowd where Jo Felder lives," continued the tall man with the chin whiskers, who had left the crowd and was leaning over the wheel and looking inquisitively at the stranger—"a preacher mebbe?"

The cold, clear cut and clean shaven face relaxed into a cynical smile, as he replied: "I'm obliged to you for thinking I look pious enough to be a preacher, but I'm not."

"I thought meibye you was, fur the preachers all stay up to Jo's, notwithstanding he's an infudel."

"Go on, driver;" and with a "much obliged to you," the stranger went on. It was nearly nine o'clock when he got out of the buggy, went up the steps, and stood on Jo Felder's verandah. As he came up from the gate he saw a man in his shirt sleeves sitting in a rocking chair by a side door, smoking a long pipe, and dreamily swaying backward and forward. As he walked toward him the man rose up, and before him towered the tall, square-shouldered honest farmer whose life he was soon to ruin.

Jo Felder, in jeans overalls and stock shoes and sweat-stained shirt, was a man

arting companion up pail them cows, my full in the face, "good night," and nothing except pretty white farm- that Seth himself uneasy man, with- tently remained un- school-master was couldn't even enjoy sations and telling m's," and how the how many cows he had with his crops put to bed in the up- of the handsome r, and wondering

who would be noticed anywhere as an athlete and an honest man. His large head, crowned with white, short-cut hair, was poised on the neck of a Hercules and the shoulders of a giant. Sixty years of toil had failed to bend the six feet two inches of manhood that confronted the stranger, nor had a mean action or a malicious thought darkened the blue eyes which looked so kindly on the young man before him. An iron-grey moustache and goatee gave the square, pleasant face a military look, and altogether the man seemed out of place as he stood there without coat or vest, his calico shirt open at the neck, his overalls scarce reaching his ankles, and his cowhide shoes coated with the dirt of stable and field.

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as he walked toward up, and before he square-shouldered life he was soon

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The city bred young man instinctively took off his hat, and with more respect than he had shown any man within a year, said: "Mr. Felder, I presume?"

"Yes, if you like, though Jo Felder is what I'm known by 'round here," and a big fat reached out and grasped the young

man's hand, which, by the way, had not been offered.

"I wrote to you some time ago applying for the Feldersburg school—"

"O, you're the feller, sir you? Dolly! Dolly! bring out a chair and that letter on top of the secretary."

"Dolly's upstairs dressin', or sumthin', so I brought ye the cheer and likewise the letter. I guess Dolly'll be down in a minnit. We wa'n't spectin' comp'ny, and Dolly didn't want to show herself, Dolly didn't. We've been washin' to-day, this is wash day here with us, and Dolly wa'n't fixed up like she's generally so she run off upstairs, right enuff, too, and I told her to run up and spruce up a bit, though I've often said as how I don't like people to run when I go ter the door, but then Dolly's th' only one I've got, and I like ter see her lookin' her best, and I kin say as thar hain't nuthin' in these parts to fashion with her—"

"So you're 'Lucius M. Strong,' sir you?" broke in the heavy but gentle voice of Jo Felder, as he held up the letter, and Mrs. Felder's garrulous apologies were stopped, though she continued to look with a half-silly and half-cunning simper at the young man.

"Lucien M. Strange," corrected the young man.

"You'll stay all night?" queried Jo.

"I would like to have the matter settled as far as your consent goes—and I'm told it means everything—this evening, as if I am not acceptable I will go back to Belkton in the buggy that brought me out; it's waiting for me."

"Well, you'd better stay, and if we can't make arrangements I'll drive ye back to the stage. We can see Peter Klumner in the morning, and Seth Hill will jine in whatever we do."

The young man explained that he'd seen Mr. Hill, and Jo at once said it was as good as fixed. Jo insisted on bringing the trunk into his house till the young man got some place to board, so the driver was paid and dismissed. As they came from the gate to the house, carrying the trunk between them, a girlish figure, draped in muslin, rose from her father's chair, and the old man, putting down the burden, stood erect with his hand on his daughter's shoulder, and with a voice which seemed to tremble in its strength with a premonition of evil, and yet with the softest notes of love, "Mr. Strange, this is my Dolly."

She held out her hand with a frank directness which was like her father's. Lucien Strange took her hand, and looking into her clear, blue eyes, said: "Miss Felder, I've not been many hours in this

pleasant country, but I've already heard of you."



"I hope they said something good about me, Mr. Strange," laughed the self-possessed Dolly.

There they stood in the uncertain light, the dark-browed stranger and Jo Felder's "My Dolly," and for an instant they looked into each other's eyes and wondered why they had never met before, while Jo watched them with a secret misgiving in his heart whether it was well that so handsome a stranger should meet his precious little girl.

The mother, who was straightening her apron and smoothing down her frock broke in: "Say good about ye? why sure! Nobody cud say nuthin bad 'bout our Dolly, 'cept mebbe that you'd gone to a picnic with Tommy Watson and both yer paw and me was agin it and if—"

"Never mind going into that, ma. It doesn't interest strangers," remarked Dolly, with some asperity.

"Mother," interrupted Jo, "get me a match, and see if this young feller's had supper."

The young man protested that he wasn't hungry, but Mrs. Felder was not to be prevented and soon a cold but dainty supper was on the table, over which Dolly presided, while Jo smoked on the veranda and the talkative mother was busy fixing the "spare bed" for the guest.

As he sat eating his cold ham and sipping his tea, for the first time Lucien Strange had a good chance to look at his fair hostess. Dolly was plump and medium-sized, she looked like her father and had short, bright brown hair which curled close to her head and

gave her a babyish appearance, though she was nearly eighteen. Her complexion was creamy white, her eyes soft sweet blue, and her mouth red-lipped, sentimental and almost sensual in its rounded curve and soft smiles. Her soft, white hands flitted like snowbirds so deftly and gracefully over whatever she touched that Lucien Strange began to wish that he could feel them again resting in his hands and he bargained with himself that he would shake hands with her when he said good night.

Jo had shoved his chair near the door and as his guest rose from the table he began:

"Say, I've been thinkin' about the moon up thar, an' I b'lieve the scient air all wrong—"

"Pappie," interrupted the thoughtless Dolly, "Mr. Strange is awfully tired: says he's been traveling since four o'clock this morning, and I know your moon's a dreadful long, so let him off to bed."

Dolly leaned over the back of the rocking chair and her white hands rested on her father's head, and her face was bent down close to his.

"You're so triflin', Dolly, you that nobody takes any interest in things," said her father, in a vox edendi tone, but he reached up and took hold of her hand and made peace with her, lest his words might wound.

"I would like to hear Mr. Felder's theory," said Strange, politely.

"Now, pappie, don't commence, hear me coming, and she's got the spare bed ready. Mr. Strange will suffer enough for one night in that. Take off the feather tick if it's too hot," whispered Dolly, then her mother's tongue, complaining that her best spread was in the wash, could not ornament the spare room, but up the evening, and Jo piloted his guest to the spare bedroom, saying, as he lit the lamp on the bureau, "If mother made the bed too fixy, there hain't nothing to prevent you from takin' a quilt and snoozin' on the sofa in the parlor."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE SPARE BED AND ITS OCCUPANT

That sturdy farmer would never have won over to a belief in the atmosphere if he had known that his guest had fumbled over the lock in an attempt to fasten the door of the "spare room" before he retired. It was Jo's boast that he never locked a door in his house, though the man who was afraid to sleep under a roof without a key turned in the door was, to Jo's mind, a suspiciously good minded person. Strange, on the other hand, was the kind of a man who

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## CHAPTER IV.

#### ED AND ITS OCCUPATION

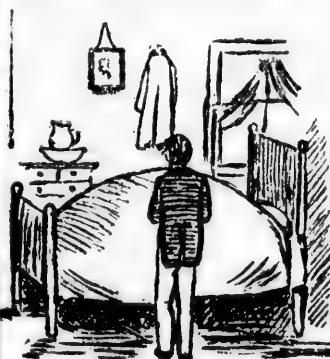
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he lock in an attempt to open the door of the "spare room".

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a key turned in the mind, a suspiciously Strange on the

stinctively shut and fastened gates and doors behind him. So, too, he guarded his tongue and face with a vigilance entirely natural, but not with greater care than that with which he watched the looks, smiles, and actions of others. It was a part of his nature to be on the alert, and without seeming to notice anything he took note of the minutest detail and stored it in his memory. Thus he was forever watching people and judging of their consistency and truth by his memory of what they said and did days, weeks, years before. He was not naturally suspicious, but his habit of thought led him to frequently remind his acquaintances of their inconsistency, and this made them think he was suspicious of their truth, when he was but seeking an experimental sort of way to know something about the workings of their mind. He chiefly hated a liar, and nextly the practical joker. He couldn't bear to be slapped on the back or have tricks played on him, and his alertness was less owing to suspicion than to a fear that somebody would get "the laugh on him." This was his weakness, and the man who as not learned how to be laughed at without showing his teeth, is but half-armed for life's fight. Neither was he given to laughing, though no man had a more exquisite appreciation of the ludicrous.



When he turned from the door and looked at the spare bed he laughed, and the mirror on the dresser never reflected a more fascinating face than the one tenured by the bright, genuine laugh excited by the "spare bed." He thought of Dolly's warning, and his smile was more kindly with the memory of her sweet thoughtfulness, and again as he remembered one of old Mr. Stir's figures of speech about someone or someone being "awole like a

pizen'd pup," he laughed like a boy and went over and jammed his finger into the bulging mass of sheet-covered feathers in which he was expected, by the over-zealous Mrs. Felder, to sleep through that sultering summer night. Strange sat down on the bed to pull off his shoes, and as he sank into the bed, and the billowy feathers rose up and covered him up to the waist, he laughed again. As he sat there looking at the absurd bed his eye caught sight of many little pieces of fancy work on the chairs and dresser, and he thought of Dolly. He, thinking of their warnings, guessed rightly enough that both Jo and his daughter had striven in vain to induce Mrs. Felder to reform her spare bed. He thought how often the sweet coaxing Dolly must have wheedled her mother and argued and—yes, scolded, he believed Dolly could scold—her mother about that awful billowy, smothering, bulging bed. He shrugged his shoulders with disgust at the idea of a woman with so little sense as Mrs. Felder showed and his disgust was deepened as he thought of a fool woman remaining a fool though she was the wife of a sensible man and the mother of a sensible and pretty daughter. As he unlaced his shoes his eye caught sight of more of Dolly's fancy work on the bureaut and it struck him that her taste was either perverted or naturally bad. The colors in everything were badly-blended, the carpet was ugly, the fancy-work carelessly done and the patchwork spread elaborately hideous. Lucien Melroy Strange was fond of pretty things and his taste had been educated by artistic surroundings into an almost perfect knowledge of what was and what was not beautiful. He threw his shoe noisily on the floor and strode to the window to rest his eyes on the moonlit landscape and the beauties which nature always provides and man cannot destroy. The river glowed like a broad band of silver, the cloudless sky, jeweled with countless stars, seemed to rest on the wooded hills, the darkened village was at rest save where here and there a light shimmered through the apple trees like a lantern through a forest.

He was still thinking of Dolly and wondering whether she inherited the weaknesses of both her parents, and was half silly like her mother and half wise and partly noble like her father. Her gentle dignity, easy grace, and kindly yet clever idea of people came back to him, and he could think of no point in which she resembled her mother, but then the spread and the fancy work—but maybe she didn't work them—but what difference? Why was he worrying about Dolly's taste?

Just then a gentle snore from an adjacent room distracted his attention; then a louder one from across the hall; then the low, musical note, ending in a snort, in the next room. He felt positive it was Dolly and her father snoring in concert. Angrily dropping the curtain, Strange left the window and commenced to undress. It galled his vanity to think that he, the cultivated gentleman, who by poverty was forced to teach the village school in order to get means to finish his medical education, should have stood gazing out into the moonlight dreaming of Dolly when that unconcerned and probably coarse and coquettish little puss was snoring instead of tossing about in her bed, and thinking of him as most girls would. Vanity, egotism, selfishness are the mainsprings of life among the cultured few—he could forgive her for anything except being less impressed by him than he had been with her. He pulled the bulging feather tick off the bed, with a feeling of disgust that he had to be his own chamber-maid, and reposing on the straw mattress he dreamed that his strange surroundings had grown familiar to him, and that he had found rest and peace in the touch of Dolly's soft little hand and that he had resolved to forget the sorrows of the past and go wherever those gentle, clinging fingers might guide him. His dream then told him that he spoke to her and that she broke his heart by preferring the disreputable "Tommy Watson" of whom he had heard. He awoke and the moonlight was streaming through the open window filling the room with its soft radiance. The big, shapeless "feather-tick" lay on the floor and the blue-and-red pin-cushion loomed up on the dresser and he decided that he didn't care whether Dolly liked him or not—that he couldn't endure a woman with bad taste—particularly when she snored.

But he dreamed of her again and thought he was in prison and she came to set him free—waking, he heard Dolly knocking at his door and calling to him that breakfast was ready, and he wondered that he hadn't noticed what a sweet voice she had.

#### CHAPTER V.

THE SCHOOL BOARD, AND PETER KLIMNER IN PARTICULAR.

At breakfast Strange watched Dolly closely, though he was apparently listening to one of Jo Felder's pioneer stories about the development of Feldersburg and the hardships the early settlers had to undergo. Dolly was eating her egg

and buttering her biscuit, and once in while turning her deep blue eyes from her father to his guest with a smile, which Strange rightly guessed was intended to indicate the points of interest and amusement in Jo's rather tedious recital. Strange could see that Dolly had often heard the story before, and desired not only to encourage her father, but to relieve the guest by seeming to take interest in that worst of all tales—pioneer yarn. In his usual search after her motive the visitor believed that she was anxious that he should popularize himself with her father by seeming interested at the right moment and laughing in the proper place. He felt that tact and grace were charms possessed by but few of the ladies whom he had met in society. However, Dolly seemed unconscious of his admiration or her own charms, and nearly all her soft smiles were for her father. It all at once struck him that maybe Dolly, for some special purpose, was being extra sweet to her papa and "Tommy Watson," and some possible picnic suggested itself to his mind as the reason.

The mother hovered around, and whenever the conversation flagged for a moment apologies were made by the gallant lad for the "vittals." Everybody knew the said "vittals" were plentiful and faultlessly cooked, but Mrs. Felder could not be persuaded to cease complaining of the "last grist of flour" and of the terrible and inexplicable luck with which yeast. The poor thing almost wept. Dolly told of how "mor'n twenty cans of her fruit had spoiled" Dolly ne'er a sign of weariness or disgust while mother's tongue ran on; and even when the maternal heart was so nearly broken, over a recital of the trouble caused by the stovepipe falling into the last loaf of "bassige" that the maternal nose was blown into an apron, with fog horn loudness, Dolly made no remonstrance, but turning her sweet, innocent eyes toward the startled guest, she inquired: "Have you taught in many schools, Mr. Strange?"

The sweet eyes didn't look inquisitive, but they were looking squarely into his face, as if inviting him to change the subject by talking about himself.

"No, Miss Felder, I have never taught in school. I hope to open my career as a teacher of the young idea in Feldersburg."

"Peter Klimner will be a good teacher of that," broke in Jo. "Peter's great advantage is his experience. Peter's singler, and I'm ashamed of anything it's because Peter wasn't born with experience. You have an

suit, and once in blue eyes from him with a smile, which was intended

of interest and other tedious recitation that Dolly had before, and desiring her father, but seeming to take a sort of all tales- a usual search after believed that she should popular- her by seeming at moment and language. He felt that such charms possessed

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to open my career in singlin', he answered, "Lucien M.

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ter's singler, and it's M.'in to keep from mixin' ye up."

anything it's because

Strange caught Dolly's eyes watching

experience. You have

and with a rather stiff smile he an-

swered, "Certainly I will be glad to hear

any ragged old clothes with you, young man!"

Strange said he hadn't.

"Peter's down on good clothes and will like enough ask ye if them air paid fer? You could catch Peter solid if he found ye running around bare-foot, but then ye wouldn't like that, would ye?"

Strange admitted that he would feel uncomfortable without having his feet covered.

"I've sent for Peter and Seth Hill to meet me here at nine. You kin work Peter for yourself, but don't git mad at him, no matter what he says. He's the singlerest man 'round here, but he don't mean nothin' by his talk. He goes barefoot till the snow flies, and he says experience has shown him that a man who goes barefoot ain't proud, and he says proud men ain't no good. You're kinder lookin', and he'll be down on ye

for that," added Jo, regretfully.

The face of Lucien Strange did not indicate the disgust he felt at having to apply for a position to a man who went "barefoot" and was in favor of people dressing in rags. Jo, however, felt that Strange was concealing his contempt, and feared that Peter's extraordinary ways would ex- ate his wrath.

"Of course," continued Jo, "I intend to stand in with ye, and Hill allus sides with me, and then you've kinder got a

team on him fur bringin' his Jinny home with ye—"

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swered, "my 'front name' again. It isn't long ago since my mother called me 'Lew,'"

"Mother livin'?" called out Mrs. Felder's voice from the pantry where the busy housewife was washing dishes.

"No, madame, my mother is dead," he answered huskily, and rising from the table, he walked over to the window, affecting not to hear Mrs. Felder's high soprano as she called out, "Father livin'?"

Dolly carried some dishes into the pantry, and Strange suspected her of admonishing her mother, as no more questions were asked. As he looked out of the window he saw a medium-sized, heavy-set man coming up the walk. An immense black beard, slightly sprinkled with grey, reached nearly to his waist. A low-crowned straw hat, with scarcely any brim, covered his long black hair. Devoid of coat, vest, shoes, or stockings, a black clay pipe projecting from his coarse lips, he was easily recognizable as Peter Klimmer.

Peter walked through the open door without the formality of knocking, pulled a chair up to the table which Dolly had just cleared, and without removing his hat or pipe, or saying "Good morning," cried out, "Let's git to biznis."

"We'd better wait fer Seth, hebdn't we, Peter? He'll be here 'fore long," suggested Jo.

"No, he'll do as you tell him to, anyhow, and I s'pose you've fixed on that stuck-up sprig that driv over from Belkton last night."

Strange's eyes flamed. He had not been addressed but he felt Peter's contemptuous glance sizing him up and his fiery temper could scarce be kept within bounds. His habitual self-control conquered and he remained gazing out of the window as if the discussion didn't interest him.

"I ain't seen Seth since the young feller cum, so there ain't been no 'settlin' of anything without consulting ye, Peter," said Jo, reproachfully.

"No you hain't"—snarled Peter as he lay back in his chair and put his hands in his pockets—"but the young whipper-snapper hauled Jenny Hill home from Belkton, so Humstir told me last night when I was cummin' through from town—gals are a danged sight too quick pickin' up with trashy young sports these times and they'll git into trouble over it, too, if they don't watch out"—and Peter's black, beady eye fixed itself on Dolly, while his coarse lips leered brutally at the pretty girl. Strange saw Dolly blush and for an instant he felt like pulling Klimmer's nose. Jo Felder, however, didn't notice the reference to his daughter and answered, simply:

"You're too hard on young folks, Peter. They mean all right and if you give 'em a chance they'll cum out all right."

"Cum out all wrong, I tell ya. Young folks air gittin' bad ways that ought to be straightened out'n them. Parson Meeker was to my house last Sunday and he's of the opinion that young folks hadn't ought to be out later'n nine o'clock, no-how, ur they li' git into mischief. And I'm goin' to make mine cum in by that time or stay out—an' no galivantin' 'round or buggy ridin' with sports that they never saw before," Peter again looked maliciously at Dolly, but she was ready for him, and with a careless laugh she inquired whether Mr. Klimmer "intended to follow his own rule of being off the roads before dark?"

This was a straight thrust, and it went home. It was no unusual thing for belated travelers to meet Peter dodging home at unseemly hours, and very often Peter was in an unseemly condition. Moreover, it was generally understood that he had formed a scandalous attachment for a grass widow who lived a few miles off, whose sharpness of tongue and violence of temper seemed to suit Peter better than the meekness and heartbroken sullenness of his own wife. Before Dolly's innocently inquiring eyes Peter's glance fell and his lips tightened over his yellow teeth.

"You're too peart, missy, and I'll give yer father trouble yit—more'n me is sayin' that, mind ye," snarled Peter, maliciously.

"Don't argue with your elders, Dolly," said Jo quietly, but his voice and look silenced Klimmer as well as Dolly. Just then Seth Hill stumbled through the door, twirling his hat uneasily. "Mornin', Peter; mornin', Joel," he jerked out as he took the chair Jo pushed towards him. "Mornin'," he said to Dolly. "Hope yer marr's well."

"Dang it, sit still," snapped Peter, "and let's git through this bizness. I s'pose you're ter hirin' this sprout over here—"

"I'm 'greeable t'anything, jest [as ye like. I'm easy suited," jerked Seth.

"Dang it, man, hev an opinion for onct. D'ye think a city chap with a swell head and fancy clothes, which like enuff ain't paid fer, cud run the Fellersburg school and boss the big boys like mine and your'n? They'd lick him the first day."

Strange had been standing with his back to the trustees, looking out of the window, but at these words he turned and looked at Klimmer, and said in a low, cold tone, which belied his gleaming eyes and the lowering frown which made his face darker and fiercer than ever:

"You need not continue this discus-

sion. I am not afraid of the school nor the scholars, but I am not prepared to be insulted by a person who imagines that his petty office gives him the right to make offensive remarks."

"You're wrong, Peter. Lucien, here, is a fine young feller, and it ain't right fur ye ter say mean things about him. He ain't used to yer ways like we air," said Jo, in a soothing tone. "Sit down, Lucien, and we'll draw up an agreement of some kind or uther of your s'tificut's all right."

"Ye mought as well!" echoed Seth.

With the steady, deliberate movement which marked all his actions, Lucien placed his chair close beside Peter Klimmer, though he had to go out of his way to secure that location. This conduct surprised Peter, but he didn't move an inch, though Lucien's chair touched his own. He only sneered and pulled his beard. As Strange sat down beside him he turned his face squarely towards the old reprobate and looked him straight in the eyes. Peter Klimmer did not pass for a coward, but his eyes couldn't meet that look of haughty contempt and bitter rage. For once the bad talker and business bully of the settlement felt that he had aroused a passion with which it would be unwise to play. Yet his irritating tongue couldn't keep quiet.

"Ye needn't get in my lap, young feller, even if ye hev taken a fancy to me," growled the bearded snapping-turtle, as he filled his pipe.

At that moment Strange's boot crushed down on the bare toes of the speaker, who, with a curse, dropped pipe and tobacco and sprang up.

"Excuse me, Mr. Klimmer. It was unintentional! Be seated"—and taking hold of his arm the young man forced Peter back into his chair. There was a bar of red across each of Strange's cheeks from brow to jaw, and as Klimmer turned to curse him the bully saw a pair of eyes which no longer looked black—they were a lurid grey, and the lips were closed tightly over the even white teeth, as you have often seen a bulldog's.

"Dang it, be careful," he muttered, as he nervously put his pipe and tobacco into his pocket, and at the same time he put his heels on the rung of the chair. He was not only subdued but frightened. Never before had he encountered disciplined rage coupled with conscious power. If he had been alone he would have feared for his life.

"As fur's I'm concerned, I'm willin' to give two hundred dollars for the rest of this year, after holladays," said Jo, as a peace offering.

"I'm willin'," echoed Seth, who was

of the school nor not prepared to be who imagines that in the right to make

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aid there was going to be trouble. It's out what we've bin payin' haint it Joe?" "Just the same as we paid the last an-teacher, and his st'ncut wan't as ad- vanced as Lucien's here."

"Looshen what? Is Looshen his hind name or his fruntname, tr what?" snarled Peter, who had turned his back on Strange.

"Lucien M. Strange," said Jo, and at a moment Strange handed Felder a mo. of agreement, which was at once signed by all three. Jo insisting at Klimmer sign it first. The moment transaction was over Seth started and Peter followed. But before the latter left the door some of his courage and insolence came back, and turning to Jo he said:



"I signed the thing because you and Seth wuz set on hevin' this feller, but you'll be sorry enuf for it yet, both on ye," said, with an ugly look at Lucien, he was one.

On his way home Peter cursed himself for yielding, and despised himself for having been cowed and bullied by a beardless hoolmaster. He couldn't account for the sensation of fear which had forced him to shut up and sign the agreement. He hated himself for his unwonted weakness, and swore vengeance on the stranger. As he walked alone he clenched his fist and hit his hip as he thought how he would like to strike to the earth that clean-faced face.

Seth Hill, too, wondered why the school

board had been so quick in settling on that fractious and dangerous looking young man. He was surprised that Jo Felder hadn't saved him from becoming a party to hiring a young man of whom every one in the settlement would be in awe. He commenced to actually feel hard towards Jo, but as he came up to the store he wiggled off his horse and went in to make some purchases and forgot his alarm.

With Jo Felder it was different. He, too, recognized the fact that a superior force had overawed the school board, and he was more or less alarmed at the investment they had made. He felt uneasy because he could not comprehend the mastery which Strange had over him as well as the others. He knew that if he had done his duty to Dolly as well as to the school section he would have never permitted the young man to stay in Fellersburg. He was the kind of a man who searches for a reason, but he was slow in finding a logical basis for his fears. He was not afraid that the young man was immoral, yet it annoyed him to see Dolly and Strange together. He was not afraid that Strange lacked talent enough to teach the village school or power to control the country youths, and yet—and yet what? He would have been much happier if he had stayed away.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DOLLY'S OPINION OF FELDERSBURG.

It was afternoon and the bars of red had died out of Lucien's cheeks, and his face was settling back into its accustomed coldness, but still the frown lingered on his forehead and his countenance looked sterner than usual. He sat on the verandah looking down at the river, tormenting himself with the question, "Should he have accepted a situation tendered him under such circumstances?" His brows gathered darkly as he thought of the insults and affronts he had suffered and he had half made up his mind to tell the Fellersburg school board to go to the devil, when a soft voice made him turn to the window behind him,

"You will make people afraid of you if you look that way," laughed Dolly.

"It is enough to make a man hate himself, Miss Felder, to think that in order to get a chance to earn a few dollars he must permit a purse-proud rag-a-muffin like Klimmer to insult him."

"I think your pride shouldn't feel injured, Mr. Strange; you got the best of it and made them do as you wanted them to. Besides, I don't think that your pride couldn't have been hurt half as badly as you hurt Peter Klimmer's foot. It was the cruellest thing I ever saw anybody

do, and then you told him such a frightful fib, and in such a way, that he knew you intended not only to hurt his foot, but his pride as well. I really thought there would be a fight."

"Did you indeed? Did you think that old calf would fight? I didn't," he said, angrily. "Would you have helped me if he had?" he asked, his face lighting up.

"Of course I would. He is such a nasty man, always saying spiteful things. I was just looking for a poker or broom when he put his feet up on the rung of the chair, and I almost laughed to think how your majestic frown made him shake."

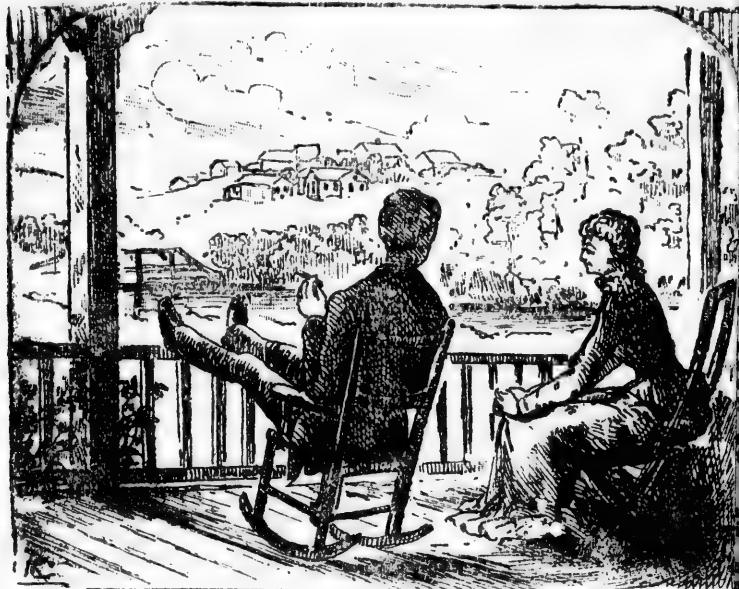
Lucien Strange was scarcely used to this kind of banter, and it did not entirely

children who may excite your ire in the Feldersburg school."

"Miss Felder," groaned Strange, "you do not imagine that I would treat a child like that? The insolent old beast seemed determined to make me angry, and I was only showing him that he was succeeding. And I thought, too," said Strange, giving her one of his unpleasantly steady looks, "that I was avenging your wrongs as well as my own."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, he said some very malicious things, and looked at you as if he thought you would take them to yourself. Strange felt a little sheepish as he made this explanation, and it struck him that he had lost caste with Dolly by making reference to her private affairs."



please him. He thought she was laughing at him, and he could bear anything better than laughed at.

"A man always makes a fool of himself when he loses his temper, and ladies never lose the chance of laughing at us," he said, crustily.

"Then don't lose it now, Mr. Strange, or I will be able to laugh at you, though up to the present moment you have made me too much in awe of you to permit a laugh. When I saw you tramp on old Peter's toes, I really trembled for the

"Don't ever bother flying to my rescue, Mr. Strange; it will keep you busy fending yourself in this tattling neighborhood." Dolly's lips curled scornfully and Strange could not tell whether the tattlers had most excited or merely displeased her.

"Indeed, I'll make no attempt to fend myself from tattlers, and if it pleases you, I will henceforth say or nothing in your defence."

"I need no defence, Mr. Strange," Dolly's cold reply. "I make none."

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oaned Strange, "you  
I would treat a chil-  
lent old beast seem-  
me angry, and I wa-  
at he was succeeding  
" said Strange, giv-  
asstantly steady look-  
ing your wrongs."

Dolly's pretty face looked almost sad  
she continued : " It isn't that so much,  
in Fieldsburg no one has any affairs  
which they should be ashamed, but  
le things start stories, and there is so  
le to fill people's minds in this small  
tice that tittle-tattle is the only thing  
ed in the evenings and on Sundays,  
en the neighbors get together ; and so  
ries grow, and people 'guess this,' and  
ess that, and the narrowness of life  
es narrowness of ideas, and so suspi-  
n and slander thrive."

Strange was surprised to hear Dolly  
speak so well, and sat gazing at her in his  
own way, and for a moment there was  
awkward pause.

" I suppose," smiled Dolly, " you are  
hiding whether or not to say that I am  
hiding myself. I warn you that you  
soon eclipse all the rest of us at the  
time which Fieldsburg will be busily  
engaged in guessing. Of course, if you  
e your certificate of birth, and a pro-  
y exact account of your life since, you  
escape the suspicion of being a forger  
bank burglar in hiding."

As Dolly finished she raised her eyes  
in an arch smile, and was startled to see  
companion's face pale and knit, his  
closing tightly over his teeth, and his  
shining defiantly into hers.

" Miss Feller," he said, in a low, hard  
voice, " you must have very pleasant soci-  
hreabouts."

" Very."

" And pray where did you learn to criti-  
so sharply the habits of your fellow  
agers?"

Dolly ignored his sneer, for she knew  
had angered him. " Pappie is differ-  
from the rest of the people around  
He reads a great many books, and  
few clever men pass this way like to  
and talk with him. And," added

modestly, " he has tried to teach  
to be more generous in my judgment  
people than our neighbors are. He sent  
way to boarding-school for two years,  
let me see what a very little place Fel-  
lburg is. And he has given me a  
tattlers, and if it  
henceforth say or  
fence."

" I make none  
morseful tears stood in her soft blue

eyes as Dolly clasped her white hands and  
gazed down at the river and the ugly  
bridge, over which the dusty road led up  
the hill into the village.

" I can agree with you that your father  
is one of nature's noblemen. No man can  
have such eyes and face and such a gener-  
ous manner who is not a good man."

" And yet people say he is an infidel  
and does harm by the way he talks—  
though they all come to him when they are  
in trouble," added Dolly, proudly. " He  
is a good man, and he thinks everybody  
else is honest and anxious to do right,  
which they're not."

" From where do the residents of this  
place mostly come?" inquired Strange,  
without looking up.

" They are nearly all of Yankee de-  
scent : the few who are not, are English,  
Scotch or Irish. Mr. Strange," added  
Dolly, " I came out here to tell you to be  
careful, because you have made an enemy  
of Peter Klimmer, and your haughty ways  
will make you unpopular with others. If  
you are going to live in Fieldsburg for  
five months you will have to be agreeable  
or be made wretched. You may or may  
not thank me for giving you advice, but I  
am giving it all the same."

" I certainly thank you," answered  
Strange, gratefully, " and I'm glad I  
have, for once, come so near making a  
friend that you take a little interest in my  
happiness."

" Then you will soon have a chance to  
act your prettiest and make some friends,  
for to-morrow is our annual 'blackberry  
picnic,' and since you belong to Fields-  
burg you will be expected to go."

" Are you going?"

" Certainly ; I always go."

" Then I'll be glad to go with you,"  
Strange said, with a gallant bow.

" Well you'll not!" retorted Dolly,  
sharply. " If you go, you must do the  
agreeable to everybody and keep away  
from me. Tene Watson was up here just  
now and said you might go with their  
crowd, and they have a comfortable rig  
and plenty of pretty girls—Jenny Hill  
and Sadie Klimmer among the rest."

For some reason Lucien became intensely,  
fercely jealous. Dolly was talking to  
him like a maiden aunt would talk to a  
half grown boy, and he resented it bitterly.  
It was on his tongue to ask her if she  
was going with Tommy Watson, but he  
checked himself, and simply said:

" And you?"

" Oh, I'll be all right," she smiled. " We  
all meet in the village and make up the  
loads there. It is ten miles to 'The Burnt  
Wood' where we are supposed to pick  
blackberries, and so we have to start early."

You will have to get breakfast at five o'clock."

Strange groaned. He did not like early rising, and the whole scheme worried him. As Dolly rose to leave, she said:

"Of course, you don't have to go, but I advise you to."

"Oh, I'll go—be delighted. What time will we get back?"

Ten o'clock likely. The day will be long enough for you to make numerous conquests. But beware of Sadie Klimmer; she's rich, handsome and dangerous—and has such a sweet papa." With this Dolly flitted away, leaving Strange in a mental rage. He knew he would be miserable all day, but chiefly he fretted because Dolly had given him the snub direct, and told him to keep away from her. Why did she talk to him like that? She was evidently afraid he would interrupt her flirtation with "Tommy" Watson. He was not coxcomb enough to imagine that women were prone to fall in love with him, but it angered him to think that Dolly had assumed such a motherly air. He laughed bitterly to think of a cultured man of twenty-three being advised by a country-bred boarding school miss of seventeen! But when he remembered how shrewdly she had touched his weak points he felt young and awkward, and his face reddened with vexation as her bantering words came back to his mind.

Supper time came and Strange felt oppressed by a sense of unwelcomeness. Felder was silent and his wife had a pain in her shoulder blade, of which she had much to say. Dolly, too, was constrained, and looked as if she had been crying. Immediately after the meal Strange went out on the verandah with Felder, and for an hour listened to Jo's theories regarding the planets, and discussed the rather novel idea that there was really no moon, and that it was merely a point in the atmosphere from which the light from the many suns and fixed stars was reflected. Jo then branched off into his theories about the creation, but stopped when from the parlor came the sound of a sweet contralto voice singing a little love song. The piano accompaniment was nothing but a series of chords touched lightly by hands which seemed to know where the fountain of music was hid. A couple more songs and then all was quiet. Strange was greatly impressed by Dolly's musical powers, and said so.

"Yes," said Jo, "the music's in her. She could allus play, and her singin' was allus sweet and touchin'. People with music in their hearts can't allus express it, but Dolly kin. She is so good an' open hearted she only has to touch the pianny

and open her mouth and the song come warbling out of itself."

Dolly appeared no more that night, but before he went to bed Strange had prevailed on Jo Felder and his wife to let him board with them while he stayed in Fieldsburg. Mrs. Felder was eager to make the arrangement, while Jo hesitated but being unable to give any reason for his opposition when directly appealed to by his wife, and half anxious for Strange's society, he consented with the same misgivings which troubled his kind heart in the morning.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BLACKBERRY PICNIC.

Lucien Strange woke with a start when Jo Felder's heavy fist smote his bedroom door, about four o'clock the next morning.

"Breakfast's ready and the young folk air beginnin' to gether, so you haint much time to spare," said Jo, through the door.

Lucien's voice sounded rather ill-natured as he answered "All right, I won't be long." He hated to face the boisterous crowd and heartily wished the blackberrying party in Jericho. But what with him was an unusual desire—to make himself popular—prompted his hasty toilet and in a few minutes he was in the dining room, where Jo Felder and Dolly were already seated by the table waiting for him. Dolly looked as fresh as a dew-gemmed flower. Her calico dress was so loose and cool, and her whole appearance indicated such complete and good-natured composure that Lucien was ashamed of his stiff manners and discontented spirit—both of which he imagined were apparent, though in fact he too had all the outward semblance of being entirely at peace with himself and the world.

"I suppose you could hardly sleep a wink last night for thinking of the fun you will have at the picnic to-day," followed Dolly's "good morning," and the innocent blue eyes looked archly up at the tall young man who, with his hands on the back of his chair, was about to take a seat opposite her.

"On the contrary, Miss Felder, I confess to having slept soundly and to leaving my bed with reluctance. I am a good sleeper and not addicted to early rising."

"Of course, I expected you to day. I always do when I am burningly anxious about anything, and awhile ago Pappy wouldn't let me go anywhere if I got fevered about it the night before."

It was almost impossible for him to either smile or retain an appearance of good nature. Her motherly tone angered him, as it did the night before, and he

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gan to think Miss Dolly had just a trifle  
too good an opinion of herself.

"And how about you, Miss Felder? Your dreams, I suppose, were of black-  
berries and brown-cheeked gallants and  
hearts broken by your smiles given to an-  
other and—and so on, you know."

Dolly did not relish this retort, which  
was not even given in a bantering tone,  
but she looked over at her father and in-  
quired, "Do you think I dream such trash,  
Pappie? You say you hear me talking in  
my sleep every night and I'll leave it to  
you if I ever dream of such silly things."

Jo was perplexed and displeased by this  
style of conversation and muttered, "You  
mayn't dream nonsense, Dolly, but you're  
talkin' it." This put a damper on the  
conversation and Jo had it nearly  
all to himself till breakfast was  
over. Then Dolly slipped a wide-  
rimmed and coquettish straw hat on  
her head, and said she was ready. As  
Lucien followed her out of the door she  
picked up an immensely large tin pail and  
swung it over her arm. It contained  
their lunch and a couple of tin cups, and  
Lucien, with his best bow, offered to  
carry the kit, but Dolly said it wasn't  
heavy, and that he was too nice to carry  
a burden. The tin pail swung gracefully  
on her arm, and with her hands clasped  
behind her, she sauntered along the road-  
side, avoiding the dust and enquiring  
nockingly of her companion if he had  
ever been at a blackberry picnic before.  
No! oh then he had no idea of the fun  
he was going to have. "You'll be the  
ion of the day I assure you," laughed  
Dolly. "It is so unusual for us to have a  
grand duke or disguised prince, that you  
may expect several of the Feldersburg  
elles to take you by the hand and lead  
you into the deep, dark, gloomy forest,  
and there tell you that they madly love  
you."

Strange looked at her sharply, and she  
met his puzzled glance with her laughing  
blue eyes: "Refuse them kindly, and be  
are and don't laugh; they can't help it  
you know!"

His face flushed hotly as he replied,  
You are making fun of me."

"Not at all, I am warning you of a great  
and impending peril. Be pleasant, but  
not too sweet, or something awful may  
happen. Remember 'The Gipsy's Warn-  
ing.' With this they reached the little  
town in the village, and Dolly at once  
introduced Strange to Mrs. Watson and  
Miss Klimmer and a couple of others,  
allowing each introduction by the request  
that they make him feel at home, and  
all everybody his "name and rank."  
As she did this she actually winked at  
her friends, and one of the country youths

so enjoyed the joke that he looked at  
Lucien and broke into a loud laugh just



as Strange's quick glance caught Dolly's  
eyelid drooping down over that sparkling  
drop of innocence, in a second and more  
profound wink. He was in such an internal  
rage that he decided to go back home, but  
his motto, "Nunquam Retrosum"—  
never retreat—saved him from such an  
ignominious surrender. Just then a young man with a rather pleasant face, a light drooping moustache and a well-  
made suit of summer tweed, came up to the  
group of which Dolly was the center, and  
that tormentor called out, "Come here, Tommy, and be introduced. Mr. Watson—our bad young man—this is  
Doctor Strange, our new schoolmaster."

Lucien Strange had been humiliated,  
and his feelings had been wantonly hurt,  
and his riotous temper was fast dragging  
its anchor, but he bowed to Tommy and  
said he was glad to meet him. Tommy,  
however, shoved out his hand in that  
direct and peremptory style which would  
make a rebuff an insult, and Strange  
accepted it and as he shook hands he  
looked into the face before him and  
Tommy tried to return the scrutiny, but  
in vain. When Tommy's eyes met that  
dark, heavy, yet luminous gleam, which  
was peculiar to Strange when he was  
both excited and angry, the weaker man  
turned away his eyes and tried to change  
the conversation at the same time.

"Which rig do you want, doctor?" said Tommy.

"If you mean me," answered Strange, "I don't know. I'm afraid I'm the one too many."

"Not at all, old fellow," shouted the good-natured Tommy. "Climb up here with my sister and she'll take care of you and talk you to death before you get to the Woods."

So it came to pass that Lucien sat next to Rene Watson in the spring wagon, which had seats ranged along each side. Sadie Klimmer got in next, and the other side being full, sat next to Lucien. In another moment the van was crowded, and Lucien's heart sank a little further when he saw that Dolly was not in the load. All the other wagons were filled, and Dolly, who had gone into the store, had not yet reappeared. Tommy Watson had untied his high-spirited horse and sat in the buggy waiting till Dolly came out with the tea which was to serve the whole party at lunch.

Genuine surprise showed itself on Dolly's face when she found the wagons loaded and she alone left out.

"You'll have to ride with me, Dolly," shouted Tommy Watson, "the wagons are full."

Dolly glanced over the four wagons and they were indeed full, and she could do nothing but say, "All right, Tommy. We'll ride in the buggy and put on style, won't we?"

"You bet," cried the exultant Tommy. "We'll lead the procession." And with this he struck his high-stepping horse and drove past the moving wagons, headed for the blackberry slasher known as "The Burnt Woods." As they drove past the wagon in which Strange had been placed, Dolly glanced at him, and he thought her cheeks had more color in them than usual, and he imagined that she avoided his scornful look. He could not help feeling that she was ashamed of the company she was in, and he hoped she felt as miserable as he did.

As Dolly and Tommy rode past, Lucien saw the girls on each side of him exchange meaning glances, which, in his heart he knew did Dolly an injustice. He knew he was being stared at and yet he couldn't talk and divert the company's attention. Somehow the whole party had started off with the wrong foot foremost, and nobody felt sociable or even pleasant. Strange tried to engage his companions in conversation, and after a few general remarks the talk gave out, and he sat sullen and silent, wishing that he had stayed at home. Once in a while Rene and Sadie would lean behind him and whisper a few words and then laugh. He felt

like pulling their ears, but succeeded in a feeble struggle with a smile, when they exchanged glances and giggled. He felt that so far he had got the worst of it, but when Tommy Watson's buggy dropped alongside the two leading wagons and arranged with the drivers to fall in line with the other two crowded vehicles, he couldn't guess what it meant till the indefatigable Tommy in a clear baritone voice started up a chorus song which was then a popular ditty. Nearly every voice chimed in, and in an instant good fellowship was established. Strange, however, was still silent and sullen, and as the shouts which followed each verse died away he felt jealous and angry when he heard Tommy Watson and Dolly singing together, with Rene Watson and a heavy voice in the rear wagon making the quartet. He was no singer, and he felt that he was "left out" of the performance. But while she sang he took the opportunity of studying Miss Watson.

In spite of both features and complexion, Irene Watson's was a striking and almost handsome face. Her nose was certainly too large, and her mouth had the same fault; but her figure was perfect. Her eyes were large, and soft, and brown and—false, so Lucien said to himself—he hair was a crowning beauty, so long, and soft and shining. Altogether she was a voluptuous woman, for the dark-brown schoolmaster could easily see that she had passed the day when it would be proper to call her a girl. While Dolly was prettily dressed, Irene Watson was style and taste in her mode. As he looked at her he wondered if she had much sense and determined to find out.

Turning to Sadie Klimmer, he watched her face as she sat listening to the song, and it struck him that she had more individuality than any of the others. She was a little, dark, thin girl, perhaps twenty years old, brightly and gaily dressed. Her clothing was richer and finer than that of the others, and her face was intense, and in repose almost sad. The full red lips were of that passionate sort which give burning kisses and say burning words of love or hate, as the case may be. The heavy black coils of hair were gathered neatly at the back of her head, which just now was bowed in sorrowful thought. If it had not been for the memory of her father's vulgar abuse and bare feet, Lucien would have admired the gentle little woman on his side, and when the song stopped and she raised her eyes, there seemed some mesmeric depths in their blackness that he was glad when she turned away and released him from their spell.

Then there came a race between two

but succeeded in a smile, when they giggled. He felt the worst of it, but the buggy dropped among wagons and drivers to talk in line crowded vehicles, he meant till the morn in a clear baritone true song which was nearly every voice instant good fellow.

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the wagons, and Jenny Hill's pretty face was opposite him, and he raised his hat and felt ashamed that he had not noticed her sooner. She bowed and blushed, and her companion said something to her and she giggled violently, and that settled Jenny Hill in Lucien's estimation, for like every sensible man, he couldn't endure a girl who blushed and giggled whenever she was looked at.

Lucien thought that ride of two hours and a half would never end, but it did, and he had found Irene Watson very clever woman, who had hoped that he would survive his sojourn in Fieldsburg and the society of the "awfully pokey people" who lived thereabouts. Little Sadie Klimner had said but little, but Lucien saw that she clung to Irene Watson like ivy does to the oak, believing in Irene's judgment, in every instance supporting Irene's plans and living in the light of Irene's smile.

## CHAPTER VIII.

'RENE AND SADIE,

At last "The Burnt Woods" were reached, and Lucien was thankful. He despised himself for his lack of self-possession, and determined to show the picnickers that he could amuse a crowd. So when the spring wagons were unloading no one was so gallant or gay as Lucien, and he pressed Irene's hand as he helped her out of the van, and looked unspeakable things at little Sadie, which made her heart flutter. Dolly was sitting on a stump giving orders to the young men and arranging the camp with wonderful skill, though she did nothing herself. She asserted her leadership without appointment or explanation, and no one thought of disobeying. Tommy Watson was her good humored and obedient slave; every young man in the company was delighted when her peremptory voice spoke his name and gave him a task.

Lucien admired her more than ever, but he knew that his self-love had either to be wounded by contact with her, or scattered by the kindness of Sadie and Irene; therefore, man-like, he chose the latter, and established himself as their escort and burden bearer. When he looked at Dolly, which was oftener than he intended, he did not find her grieving over his absence, though he imagined that she once gave him a look, which said plainly enough, "You can't deceive me, you are almost crying for me!" After that he was doubly anxious to have a jolly time with his new friends. After luncheon he wandered about with their big tin cans, and helped them pick berries, and told stories, and recited poetry, and told

them numerous fables about his funny adventures, but they failed to notice that he



was always brightest, most attentive, and jolliest when Dolly, attended by Tommy and a large, dark, and sullen youth, was near by.

"Your brother Malon appears to be another of Dolly's conquests," Irene remarked, as Dolly and her swains appeared in the distance.

"So it seems," answered Sadie; "it's awfully funny to see Lon struck on a girl, for he can't say ten words to a decent woman without looking sheepish and frightened."

"I'm afraid he'll be a dangerous rival for Tommy, for Lon can sing, if he can't talk, and that is the way to Dolly's affections apparently. Tommy says that was the way he got solid."

Lucien now knew that the heavy bass voice he had heard belonged to Lon Klimner, and never before had he regretted so bitterly that he had not learned to sing.

"Lon can have her and welcome, so far as I am concerned," continued Irene. "None of us like her, and I'm sure Tommy doesn't care for her except for fun. She is too much like him to make a good mate for my fast brother. And just

think how she would lord it over the rest of us girls if she ever got into our family ; all she wants to make her happy is to make someone feel mean and miserable."

Lucien wondered if this was really the reason Dolly had treated him so cruelly ! But then she spoke so kindly to him, and those eyes of hers were so sweet and innocent.

" And she can look so sweet and innocent, and touch your hand so softly, that you think she is just dying to make you like her," continued Irene, with a laugh, as if she had divined Lucien's thoughts. " If I could do that like she can, I'd go to a city and marry some rich old man, and break his heart inside of six weeks."

Sadie laughed, but Lucien's face flushed to think how he had been duped by Dolly's pretty ways, which seemed to be so well known and thoroughly understood by everyone but himself.

" I hope Lon won't marry her, either, for I know she won't make him happy. He isn't smart enough for her, but I'm sure if he gets a good woman it will make him a better man."

Sadie was never malicious intentionally, but her words carried to Lucien's mind the idea that she knew something against Dolly's goodness, and he felt sick at heart to find his idol shattered by these chatty country girls, whom he supposed to be above the malice and inuendo of city life.

" I'm afraid we've shocked Mr. Strange by gossiping about our neighbors," smiled Rene.

" Oh, no ; I'm a student of surgery and am fond of dissection, even when it is nothing more than the dissection of character," he replied, with a hard laugh. The nimble fingers of his companions were successful in filling the pails with berries, and by four o'clock they found themselves alone in the great woods where the fire had stripped every tree of bark and foliage. It struck Lucien that he had carried those pails of berries about far enough, and he hinted that they might have some difficulty finding their way back to the wagons.

Irene glanced around the desolate bush, and then climbed onto a heap of fallen timber. The evening sun shining on her grand figure and striking face caused Sadie to exclaim " Doesn't Rene look lovely ? "

Lucien promptly exclaimed that she looked like the queen of blackberries and with a meaning smile added, " and you like the queen of hearts." Sadie blushed and Lucien felt that it was not a very appropriate saying, but good enough to please a country girl.

" That is west," cried Rene from her

perch. " And that north. We came in at the northwest corner of the slashing, so our homeward way is in the direction of that big blackened pine," and she pointed towards a giant tree which towered above its fellows on a little rise of ground a mile away.

" We are in luck to have some one with us who is so expert in wood-craft for I hadn't the slightest idea where we were," exclaimed Lucien.

" Country girls all know east from west and north from south, even if they don't know much else," said Irene, with a toss of her handsome head, as she washed her hands in a sluggish little stream and dried them on her apron.

" I think you know a great deal else. Miss Watson. You and your friend have been the most charming companions I ever had. I'm sure I'll never forget today's blackberrying picnic." He never did. His words had a meaning which he did not intend, and the picnic lived in his memory as the beginning of the dark days which afterwards closed around him like eternal night.

They crossed the little stream, and Irene's ungloved fingers tightly grasped his hand as he steaddied her over the trunk of a fallen tree, which served them as a bridge. Their eyes met and he felt a thrill of pleasure in what he read there. Then Sadie's little hand was in his for a moment and as she reached terra firma again she looked up at him thankfully, and he felt that Sadie Klimmer might be relied upon as his friend. As they trudged through the woods the girls insisted on helping to carry the pails of berries. Rene's hand was touching his, and he recognized the fact that she was making no attempt to have it otherwise. He was sensible of her magnetism, and knew that she was a woman who could lead the majority of men wherever she willed. She smiled whenever he spoke, and her eyes expressed an admiration for him which was sweet to his soul after Dolly's rebuffs. Still he could not help feeling afraid of her, and when he heard a little sigh on the other side he turned and said, with genuine tenderness :

" Miss Klimmer, you are tired. We had better rest a little while. Miss Watson and myself are stronger than you and have worn you out."

" Oh, no, no ! " cried Sadie, " I'm not tired the least bit. I was just thinking and forgot myself, and was hanging on to the pail instead of helping carry it. Father says that's the way I always help."

" Your thoughts couldn't have been very pleasant, for I'm sure I heard you heave a great big sigh," said Lucien, kindly.

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"Surely not! Did I?" asked Sadie,  
appealing to 'Rene, with a blush.

"I didn't hear you; but I was so busy  
watching for the big pine that you might  
have lost your pail of berries without ex-  
citing my attention."

As 'Rene said this she looked meaningfully  
at Lucien, as if to inform him that he had  
become the big pine tree and guiding star  
of her life. Fortunately for her Lucien  
did not see the look she gave him, or that  
astute young man would have been alarm-  
ed by the too great progress he had made.  
He was watching the little tired figure on  
his right, and noting the downcast eyes  
and melancholy lips. She looked up at  
him once, and her dark, wistful eyes were  
moist with tears she could scarcely keep  
back. She tried to laugh, and it ended in a  
little choking sound very much like a  
sob.

"I'm glad we are nearly there," she  
said, as if in explanation, "I am getting  
awfully tired."



Her weakness appealed to Lucien's  
strength, and his manly impulses made him  
feel like gathering her up in his arms and  
carrying her. He banteringly suggested  
something of the kind, but Sadie's temper  
flashed out in a moment.

"Please don't pity or patronize me. I  
don't like it. Thank heaven we are at the  
wagons."

And so they were. Nearly everybody  
had returned with well filled pails, and  
were sitting under the trees or spreading  
the supper which the girls had brought.

## DOLLY IS MISSING—HER EXPLANATION.

Strange looked for Dolly, but no Dolly  
was in sight. Malon Klimmer lay under  
a tree smoking and looking very much out  
of sorts, his heavy, sullen face scowling  
darkly at the jolly crowd near him.  
Strange wondered how Dolly had got rid  
of his society, and rather sympathized with  
him, as Tommy Watson had carried the  
prize away from them both. Sadie introduced  
Lucien to her brother, and after  
asking Malon to bring the lunch basket  
from the wagon sat wearily down apart  
from the others. Malon dropped the  
basket at her feet and turned away.

"Lon, please lay the cloth for me and  
tell 'Rene to put what's in her basket



with mine. Please do, Lon; I'm so tired." Lon seemed to have a rough affection for  
his sister, and did as he was told, but  
with very bad grace. Lucien brought  
Sadie a cup of water, and chatted in such  
a comforting sort of way that Sadie felt  
deeply grateful.

"You seem unhappy as well as tired,  
Miss Klimmer; picnics and pleasure don't  
always go together, do they?"

"Never, as far as I am concerned; but  
Parson Meeker says it's because I have  
no happiness within myself and depend

on others to make me happy. And at picnics I am always the 'weak sister' who get in the way before it is over. And I confess," said Sadie, clasping her hands in her lap, "that I cannot help being envious of those who are happy and give pleasure to others, while I neither give nor receive, though if I knew how I would try so much to do both."

"You are unjust to yourself, Miss Klimmer. No one could know you without feeling happier for having you with them. You look so grateful for every cheering and friendly word, and your eyes say so many pretty things, that you are a delightful companion, even though you say but little. It is not strength nor even courage that men look for in women; often, indeed, weakness and a seeking for kindness and protection bring to life more real attachment in the masculine heart than the opposite qualities. Men are tremendously proud and selfish, and like to think they are terrible fellows, eager to protect and cherish the weak." Lucien thought that kindness must be a stranger to Sadie, or she would not have looked so happy and grateful as she listened to his half whispered words.

"Where's Tommy?" inquired 'Rene Watson, as she came up. "Everybody but that miserable brother of mine and Dolly Felder are here, and supper is ready. I hope you aren't saying pretty things to Sadie, because she makes the great mistake of believing them and breaking her tender little heart if they aren't kept up."

Sadie's face flushed, and Lucien said, coldly: "I was saying nothing that I didn't mean, and if Miss Klimmer gives me the opportunity I will endeavor to prove myself faithful."

'Rene was astonished, and found it easier to change the subject than pursue it. "Dolly Felder is always doing something to make herself talked about, and if she only knew how the girls are wondering where she is she'd hurry back." This remark was addressed to Sadie; but Lucien, who had turned away, heard it, and also caught the malicious tone in which it was said. He felt angry with himself for the sickening pain it gave him. He wished Dolly had a brother who could tell her not to do such unconventional things, but he still felt that she was only thoughtless.

Supper was eaten and the boys and girls told wild stories of the berries they had got, while many accusations were brought that certain pails of fruit had been purchased rather than picked. At the cloth where Lucien sat the company was restrained for a while by his presence, but even there fun broke out, and it was not

long before 'Rene Watson burst forth in a song which was followed by others. Lon Klimmer refused to sing, but all the others joined in, and the fun wound up with a cotillion, the music for which was provided by 'Rene Watson on a comb covered with paper, and a couple of boys who whistled vigorously, but not always in tune. Lucien danced with Sadie, whose weariness had passed away, and for once she looked really happy.

It was sundown, still no Dolly was in sight. The horses were hitched to the wagons and soon all were on the road. Lucien felt uneasy but said nothing. The girls looked meaningfully at each other and laughed. The singing began again, and Lucien had just been informed that it was only a mile to Fellersburg when the wagons turned down a hill and forded a little stream were the horses were watered. Everything was still for a moment, and far down the road the rapid beating of a horse's hoofs on the hard, dusty turnpike could be heard. Nearer and nearer, through the yellow, autumn moonlight, and just before the buggy came to the bridge, the crowd shouted and Tommy Watson's horse reared and plunged and then stood still. The sweat was rolling down his flanks, but he didn't look hotter or more ill at ease than Tommy himself. Dolly, however, sat beside him as cool and collected as usual, and looking down over the railing of the bridge she inquired if they had gone in swimming, or were they holding a grand "baptizing."

"Why, where have you been," cried 'Rene Watson; "we were afraid you had eloped."

"With whom, the horse or Tommy?" gravely inquired Dolly.

"We left the horse safe enough in the Burnt Woods, but we wondered what you were doing." 'Rene said this very spitefully.

"Well, your smart aleck brother induced me to go with him for a boat ride on a raft we found on the river bank, and the punting pole proved too short to reach bottom and too thin for a paddle, and we drifted along the stream till we struck the other side, and then had to walk to the bridge on the main road and thence to where we left the horse and buggy. And here we are without pails or berries or supper." Then turning to Tommy she sang:

"Do you recall that night in June  
Upon the Danube river,

And how you screamed a lively tune  
That made the Burnt Woods quiver."

"Come on children, we must get home," and as the horses pulled the wagons up the hill to the bank Dolly started. "Climbing Up Zion's Hill," and a full chorus followed,

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though neither Tommy nor Malon Klim-  
mer nor 'Rene joined in the old-fashioned  
hymn.

Lucien could not understand how Dolly  
could be so reckless and Tommy's silence  
and evident discomfiture were unexplained.  
'Rene returned to Sadie remarking that Dolly  
had got out of it nicely, but had failed to  
explain how she and Tommy had hap-  
pened down at the river. Lucien felt that  
Dolly had injured herself by her careless  
conduct, but resented 'Rene's criticisms as  
unjust. As he walked home with Dolly  
from the village he ventured to remark

pails and brought back no berries. But  
Pappie won't scold me, see if he does."

It was ten o'clock, but Jo Felder was  
sitting in the moonlight on the verandah  
smoking and Dolly tripped up to him, sat  
down on his knee, and putting her arms  
around his neck gave him a hearty hug.  
With a hand on each of his cheeks she  
held his face up to hers and looking lov-  
ingly down at him inquired if he had been  
good while she was gone. Lucien sat on  
the steps leading into the garden and  
watched them. Dolly called to her  
mother that she hadn't had a bite to eat



that she seemed careless of the conven-  
tionalities, and her escapade would add to  
the stock of tattle in the neighborhood.  
He spoke seriously and almost bitterly  
and Dolly looked at him with serio-comic  
gravity till he ceased.

"I'm surprised at you Mr. Strange.  
You are acquiring Feldersburg habits  
very rapidly. One more picnic and you  
will pass for a native, and your mind  
will be so narrow that you will only be  
able to see with one eye." Dolly spoke  
scornfully and vigorously, but wound up  
with a laugh. "What will break mother's  
heart will be the fact that I have lost her

since dinner and then told her adventures  
to her father in such a humorous way that  
even Lucien was forced to join in the  
laugh.

"You ought to have seen Tommy,  
Pappie, he was so frightened that it  
stopped his watch, and he nearly  
fell off the raft. And to hear him  
shout!" Dolly clapped her hands and  
laughed. "He put his both hands up to  
his mouth and yelled till he was hoarse!  
And while he was giving a parting salute  
to the shore and his face was swollen with  
shouting and his eyes stuck out like  
oysters on the half-shell I gave the raft a

little tip and he squatted down in the water and—" Dolly whispered mysteriously, " and got all wet ! Oh, how funny he looked all dripping and rotten wood sticking to his wet clothes ! And do you know, Pappie, he repented and reformed right there on the raft and promised the raft and the river and me, and everybody, that if he ever got on shore again he'd never be naughty again and would join the church and sell his trotting horse and settle down. And just then one of the poles of the raft floated away from the rest and Tommy nearly had a fit. I told him to grab it and paddle like a little man. He did, and as we got near the bank I took the other pole and struck bottom, but just as we were within a rod of the bank a knot on Tommy's log pulled off half of his thumb nail, and he forgot his repentance and swore an awful word, and I gave the raft another tip and he sat down again. I reproved him and told him to get up and be good, and he sulked all the way home."

Lucien could not see Jo Felder's face, but he recognized the fact that the old gentleman was not well pleased. "Dolly, child, you shouldn't run such risks. How would your old pappie have felt if his little Dolly had bin drowned, or any harm had come to her?" His voice trembled as he spoke, and his brawny arm clasped his child to his big heart, and tears started in his honest eyes.

Dolly's head was pillow'd on her father's shoulder, and she pulled his face down and kissed his cheek. "When Mr. Strange heard of my adventure he said he was afraid it would furnish the goasips with talk about me. He never thought about the danger I was in," and the perverse girl straightened up and turned toward the motionless figure on the steps.

"City-bred folks think more on sich things than we do, Dolly. And I can only think of how it would break your poor old lonesome pappie's heart if anything happened to my Dolly."

Strange remained silent. He felt that he was rebuked, and that he knew nothing of that pure and mighty love which is ever patient, forgiving, and unselfish. Pride was no part of Jo's love for his daughter; he loved her as he did his life; she was a part of his being. With many, if not with the majority of men, pride is before love, and it is seldom that their affection clings to one in whom they can take no pride and self-glory.

Dolly's mother had heard her adventures, and when supper was ready Mrs. Felder, after referring to the pain in her shoulder blade, asked her "what she did with them pails." Dolly made a wry face and said they were lost. Her mother

groaned that she'd "bin countin' on them berries fur breakfast." Dolly expressed her sorrow and said it didn't matter.

"But it duz matter, Dolly. Them pails cost me ten shillin's apiece, and I was countin' on havin' blackberries and cream fur breakfast. And more'n twenty can of my fruit spoiled, and I was countin' on perzervin' some of them berries. Your turbel careless Dolly—acteally reckless, and I haint got a ten-quart pail left in the house."

Dolly looked quizzically at Lucien, and was about to speak, when Jo called out, "Say Dolly, did ye git yer feet wet? If ye did, don't sit around in wet stockin's longer'n ye kin help, or mebbe you'll be gettin' a cold."

Dolly's eyes filled as she looked at the stalwart old man who was leaning through the door, ever solicitous for her welfare.

"They are dry now, Pappie dear," and with these loving words she kissed him good-night, and, with a nod to Lucien, ran upstairs. Lucien soon retired, but he tosed in the sea of feathers thoroughly perplexed. The blackberry picnic had developed some characters he could not understand. Was Dolly what she seemed, or was she fooling her honest and unsuspecting old father with a show of affection she was incapable of feeling? A thousand times he asked himself this question, and as often he replied by turning over in his mind the sneers and inuendoes of his companions at the picnic. He fell asleep trying to solve the problem, and with a final and hopeless effort to guess whether that feather bed would smother him before morning.

#### CHAPTER X.

DOLLY ASKS LUCIEN A FEW QUESTIONS.

While Strange was dressing next morning he paused with a helpless sort of gesture to inquire of himself how it was that Dolly had completely thrown him out of his usual cold self-possession, and as he looked at himself in the glass he smiled quietly, and formed a resolution that he would go back to his old cynicism, and make Miss Dolly feel very uncomfortable. Armed with this noble resolve he went down to breakfast, and found Dolly dressed in white, and looking cooler, breezier, and more innocently aggressive than ever. She inquired how he liked the spare bed, and if he had dreamed of blackberries and black eyes. Her father's entrance silenced her until breakfast was over, and then she found him sitting on the shady side of the house, his feet on the railing of the verandah, and an unlit cigar between his teeth.

"Trying to decide between Sadie the

coun'tin' on them  
Dolly expressed  
it didn't matter.

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ER X.

FEW QUESTIONS.

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rich and 'Rene the regal? Tell me all  
about how they used you yesterday, and  
the pretty things they said to you, and  
I'll settle it for you," and the saucy Dolly  
put a rocking chair within easy talking  
distance of Lucien and proceeded with  
her sewing.

"No," said Lucien, shortly; "I was  
not thinking about myself."

"No!" echoed Dolly, provokingly.  
"How unselfish! You were wondering  
which throbbing heart could best survive  
your coldness. I'm so glad you told me,  
for I can give you advice. Sadie, I am  
quite sure, would die"—Dolly dropped  
her sewing and folded her pretty hands—  
"her dark eyes would fill up with tears,  
and she would pine away and climb the  
golden stair. But 'Rene wouldn't pass  
away. Oh, no! She would only lose her  
appetite for a few days and then recover."

Lucien stared at her in amazement for  
a moment, and was about to speak, when  
she leaned back in her chair and continued  
in a contemplative tone:

"I suppose it was almost too soon for  
the tender Sadie to lean wearily against a  
tree and burst into tears, but—"

Dolly was gazing contemplatively at  
Lucien, and she noticed that he looked  
down and moved uneasily in his chair.

"But, perhaps, owing to the unusual  
attractions you displayed, the crisis was  
pre-pre—not premeditated; what do  
you call it?"

"Precipitated," suggested Lucien, with  
a stony smile.

"Yes, precipitated. Doesn't she look  
just too tender and clinging when she  
weeps?"

"I think, Miss Felder, that you do  
yourself an injustice by ridiculing the  
unhappiness of a young lady who at least  
sought no opportunity of speaking ill of  
you," Lucien thought this rebuke would  
stop Dolly's chatter, and he delivered it  
in his most crushing manner.

Dolly simply laughed and inquired if he  
wasn't surprised to observe that she still  
lived and had her being after such a with-  
ering speech. "No," said she, "Sadie  
never says mean things, she only repeats  
them; or what answers the purpose bet-  
ter, laughs when 'Rene, her guardian  
angel, scorches people. But you haven't  
told me whether Sadie's sad, salt tears  
touched your manly heart and made you  
feel like devoting your life to making her  
happy."

Dolly knew she had hit him hard, and  
that he was getting angry, and it seemed  
to encourage her. "Poor little thing, how  
sorry you must have felt for her! Rich,  
beautiful, with a proud, aristocratic  
papa, and yet unhappy! Dying for some  
one to love her. Sad, isn't it?"

"Very," said Lucien, looking the other  
way, and wondering where this young  
mind reader had got her facts.

"And you then spoke to her in a low,  
deep, rich tone, as the novels say, and  
told her that one so young and fair should  
have the treasures of a thousand hearts  
heaped at her feet, and then she patted  
her eye with a handkerchief and gave you  
a sad, sweet smile which haunted your  
dreams all night, now didn't they?"  
Dolly's voice was quite tragic, but the  
laugh with which she concluded was in-  
tensely provoking.

"You should have been an actress,  
Miss Felder; you would become a star at  
once if you went on the stage. But I am  
afraid you would hardly succeed as a for-  
tune teller; you attempt to give too many  
details.

"Oh, I'm sure I guessed rightly," in-  
terrupted Dolly. "Tommy Watson told  
me his experience and assured me that  
Sadie's campaign is always the same."

"Then Tommy Watson is not a gentle-  
man and knows as little about the finer  
feelings of a woman as he does about the  
decencies of life," Lucien retorted angrily,  
"and if I were in your place I would not  
only object to be the recipient of such con-  
fidences but refuse to be the companion of  
a man who thinks it smart to ridicule the  
weaknesses of a woman who has been silly  
enough to be kind to him."

"Excuse me, Mr. Strange," said Dolly,  
"but I am neither Tommy's companion nor  
confidante. What Tommy knows every-  
body knows."

"Then he is a dangerous man, and you  
have no reason to hope that he will re-  
spect either you or your confidence any  
more than he is accustomed to respect the  
confidence of other people. And," contin-  
ued Lucien, looking sharply into her  
face, "I don't believe, with all your as-  
sumed indifference to what people say,  
that you would care to be the jest of a  
man of the Tommy Watson stripe."

Dolly was hurt, but as she bent over her  
sewing her low, provoking laugh con-  
cealed her appreciation of the wholesome  
truths which Lucien had told her. "You  
should quit medicine and enter the pulpit,  
Mr. Strange; you need no further pre-  
paration, and I am sure you would,  
as Parson Meeker so often says, be able to  
snatch thousands of 'brands from the  
burning.' But while you are not in sacred  
orders, please pardon me for objecting to  
being considered a 'brand' which is about  
to be burned in the blaze of Feldersburg  
gossip." Dolly looked haughtily and scorn-  
fully at Lucien as she said this, and he  
felt as if he were the culprit.

"Pardon me if I have assumed the  
right to advise you, but what I said grew

out of your exceedingly sharp conjectures as to what happened me yesterday."

"In the words of Mr. Humstir," laughed Dolly, with returning good humor, "mebbe it did, like, enufit it did. Yes it did, it did be-gum."

Lucien laughed at the clever imitation of voice and gesture with which Dolly repeated Humstir's favorite phrase, and, glad to change the conversation, remarked that the stage driver was the most in-vetebrate bore he had ever met.

"Wait till you meet Mrs. Watson!" exclaimed Dolly. "Why, old Humstir himself says he feels like taking a back seat and letting Mrs. W. drive when she is a passenger with him. Pappie says that he rode with them once and Mrs. Watson was on the front seat with old Humstir, and she asked him so many questions that he didn't have time to swear at his horses. He tried to get a rest by abusing his team but he only got as far as 'Git up, thar, dog-gone ye, or I'll skin ye alive. I will; yes, I will, I will, beg—' when Mrs. Watson nudged him and asked him what he said that for, and it broke Humstir's heart, and he swallowed a quid of tobacco and forgot to lie for nearly a mile. And then when he began 'Mah Watson' gravely told him she was afraid he didn't stick to the truth, and asked him if it was true that he lied about his age, and the passengers all roared, and old Humstir and Mrs. Watson both got mad and wouldn't speak till they got to the next tavern. When he came out she asked if he'd been drinking, and he winked at the crowd and invited her to go in and 'take suthin.' Pappie says it is the only time Humstir ever offered to treat any one, but Mrs. Watson didn't appreciate the honor, and told him she didn't feel safe riding with a drunken man, and they came near having a fight." Dolly's honest, merry laugh rang out as she finished the story, and Lucien thought he'd never seen her looking so pretty.

"But you'll soon see 'the Watson,' as Pappie calls her. The regal 'Rene' will have you up for tea at an early date, and will remind you and the rest of the assembled multitude what a lovely time you and she had at the picnic. And don't be alarmed if she conveys to you and everybody else the idea that she is engaged to you and isn't ashamed of it. As long as she hasn't any letters from you to show to the neighbors it will be all right, and no one will believe it." Dolly laughed, and thus encouraged. Dolly proceeded:

"It will be a treat to keep your hands in your pockets, unless you want the fascinating 'Rene' to squeeze 'em in pub-

lic. And 'Mah' Watson will come around and examine your shirt collar, and inquire where you got it, and if it was expensive, and if there are any more of the same kind, and if you think Tommy could get one like it, and then she will turn to her hopeful son and insist that he must go to town and get one, it is so stylish and gives Mr. Strange such a distinguished appearance."

It gave Strange the "creeps" to think of undergoing such an examination, but he could not help joining in Dolly's infectious laughter.

"And Mr. Watson. How about him?"

"He's an awfully funny little man," answered Dolly. "He doesn't count in the family only about once a month. When he gets mad, and then everybody has to take to the woods or get attended to with a harness tug or pump handle. He sits on a log for hours



ruminating over his wrongs, and then flies into the most awful passions and swears he's going to be boss in his own house or pound the family into pulp. Mrs. Watson at once takes sick and goes to bed, Tommy goes for the doctor and comes back full, 'Rene' goes visiting, and the rest of the family scatter into the cellar or strike for the timber. Next day he quietes down and looks dignified; then Mrs. Watson comes down stairs, and the old man isn't heard from again for a month. He goes around swearing under his breath all the time without knowing

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it, though he is a church member. If you want to make him your everlasting friend argue on religion, and express some doubts as to the existence of the bad place. He is anxious to convince himself that there is no place where the wicked are eternally tormented, and I'm certain that the moment he succeeds in that he will commit suicide. All he fears is that the other place is worse than his home, but if he were sure that it wasn't real fire and brimstone I think he would be willing to take desperate chances and leave Mrs. Watson here."

As Lucien sat silently thinking of the horrors of the home he had heard described, Dolly rose to go. "Thinking about the desirability of 'Mah' Watson' as a mother-in-law?" she inquired. "Don't be discouraged. Rene would be willing to fly to the ends of the earth with you—or almost anybody else."

"No," he said, thoughtfully, and looking at her in an absent sort of way. "I was thinking how different your home is to the one you describe. I cannot imagine, if you were surrounded by such scenes, what would become of your merry laugh and the sunshine in your face."

"You are becoming speculative, and what is worse, complimentary, so I must take flight," and away she went like a sunbeam, her merry laugh ringing in Lucien's ears, and the problem of what sort of a girl she was, as usual, still troubling that young man's far too inquisitive mind.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FELDERSBURG SCHOOL-HOUSE.

On Monday morning school was to begin. During Saturday and Sunday Lucien's dread of encountering the horde of unwashed and impertinent youngsters that thronged the Feildersburg cross roads, grew into a positive horror. He had bought a set of the text-books in use and familiarized himself with the first few lessons; but he could see the grinning faces of the boys and girls, and knew his temper would be tried as it never had been before. He was entirely unused to school-room methods, and he knew nothing about even the simplest system of organization. In the graded city school, where his early education was gained, the scholars were all of similar age and advancement, and maintaining order was about the only task the teacher had. Here he knew he would have to teach the alphabet to one class and algebra to another. How, on the start, to make the various classes work together puzzled him, and he felt sure he would make mistakes which would exhibit his lack of experi-

ence to the school and perhaps raise a laugh at his expense. The thought of those youngsters making him the butt of their laughter tortured him beyond measure. As he thought of it his face darkened and his heavy brows met in a fierce frown. A thought struck him. He would ask Dolly for some points, and find out how the school had been run in the past. What! Ask that tormentor, and be teased and laughed at? Never! He would pound the school into shape with a club before he would humiliate himself to her.

He turned the subject over in his mind, and on Sunday afternoon determined he would take a walk down by the river and decide on some plan. His face was dark and forbidding as he wandered down through the orchard. The ripe harvest apples fell at his feet, only to be kicked viciously aside; the birds chirped in the trees, the gentle summer wind was cool and pleasant, the ripple of the river soft and soothing; but he strode on with his hat pulled down over his eyes, his hands pushed into his pockets, and his teeth tightly clenched.

"A case of suicide, evidently," murmured Dolly, who happened to be sitting on a rustic bench under a tree, through the branches of which a grapevine had woven a solid mass of foliage.

Lucien started as he heard her voice, and begged pardon for interrupting her.

"Not at all," answered Dolly, with that good-natured gravity which sometimes made her sayings so funny. "I should beg your pardon for interrupting what promised to be a most interesting suicide. Please go on as if I were not here. We country girls never have an opportunity of seeing desperate characters bury their sorrows beneath the billows, and I was just promising myself such a lovely treat of that kind when I saw you striding down the hill like despair with a dog after him."

Lucien glared at her, but she smiled so sweetly and encouragingly at him that his wrath subsided, and he threw himself on the grass, exclaiming, "Please don't tease me, Miss Feild. I feel so miserable and out of place and unfitted for to-morrow's work that I don't know what to do with myself."

"And so," smiled Dolly, "you decided to reach a happier clime by way of the river."

"Please don't," groaned Lucien. "I had not the least thought of drowning myself."

"You couldn't in there," said Dolly, pointing to the river, "it is only three feet deep. But why should you be miserable? You are young and would be

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awfully mad if anybody said you weren't brilliant and handsome. The weather is lovely, and it is the Sabbath, when people should feel good and happy, and not cross and ugly."

"Do you know what it is to feel lonesome and utterly homeless and friendless?" inquired Lucien.

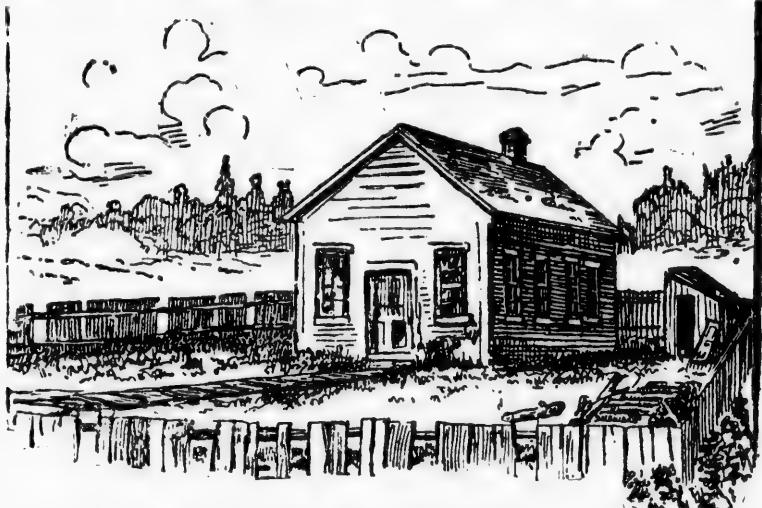
"Why, certainly not; girls never feel that way; it is only men who want the whole world to fall down and worship them who get into that frame of mind," answered the merciless Dolly.

"Then I suppose I am one of the egotists of whom you speak, for I am utterly wretched, and more than that," said Lucien, sitting up and looking dolefully at his self-possessed and smiling tormentor. "I feel that to-morrow I am going to make a consummate donkey of myself and be laughed at by every dirty-faced pupil of the Fellersburg school."

will all be afraid of you, and will be as quiet as mice."

"But I haven't the faintest idea how to begin," groaned the unhappy youth. "I never taught a country school or any other kind of a school, and don't know the first thing about dividing the children into classes."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Dolly, as she sat with one foot under her and her clasped hands around her knee. She looked wisely down at Lucien. "Tell the children that you want to continue the same system as the last teacher as nearly as possible, and get one of the older scholars to tell you which class used to come first; call it up, take down the names of those in it, find what lesson they had last, and then assign them one in the beginning of the book, telling them, of course, that you want to review what they have gone over. And so on with the next



THE SCHOOL HOUSE.

"Do you know," said Dolly, after a long pause, "that I believe you get most of your misery by thinking about yourself and wondering what people will think about you and say about you, and how you will look and act."

Lucien's face reddened and he pulled up a long blade of grass and nervously wound it around his finger as he waited for her to continue.

"If you only knew it, people will be contented with whatever you do as long as you do it goodnaturedly, and without trying to make a splash. The children

class, till you have them all divided off, and by that time you will get the hang of the whole thing."

"That's splendid," cried Lucien. "I'll do it."

"But first of all call the roll," added Dolly. "You will find the old register in your desk, and Pappie has the key. Likely you will find a class book, too, and by that you can tell if the scholars try to promote themselves from one book to another. I know I always used to whenever we got a new teacher."

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"I wish I had that register here now,"  
exclaimed Lucien.

"There is nothing to prevent you from  
having it, and if you like I'll go up to the  
schoolhouse and get it for you," said  
Dolly.

"Thank you a thousand times," cried  
the grateful Lucien. "Won't you let me  
go with you?"

"Certainly if you will quit looking so  
cross. I'll go up to the house and get the  
key from Pappie and you can join me on  
the road."

As Dolly ran up the hill Lucien watched  
her till the apple trees hid her white dress  
from his sight. He felt happy. Dolly  
had condescended to be kind to him for  
once, and the burden of the morrow had  
been lifted from his mind. He acknowled-  
ged that with all her sauciness he had  
never met a woman who charmed and tor-  
tured him like Dolly. And she was so  
sensible and quick to decide! And so  
comforting when she was kind. So his  
thoughts ran on, with now and then a quick  
jealous pang when he thought she didn't  
care for him.

At last Dolly came down the hill, and  
Lucien swung himself over the fence into  
the road and joined her. She chatted  
merrily as they went through the village,  
telling him who lived here and there, and  
describing in a few mimicking words the  
peculiarities of each. Stopping in front of  
a great big red building, like a barn, she  
said: "This is the Feldersburg academy."

There it stood in all its hideousness, a  
square red barn with three windows on each  
side and two in the end. The play-ground  
was small, though land was cheap; the gate  
was off its hinges and the fence was nearly



torn down. Nearly half the glass in the  
windows was broken, the door lacked a  
knob, and one of the panels had been  
kicked out. Not a single tree shaded that  
mean little play-ground, and a woodpile  
was its only ornament.

"Pretty place, isn't it?" asked Dolly, as  
she fitted a key weighing about half a  
pound into the lock. The door swung  
open, and when Lucien saw the interior  
his spirits sank into his boots. A big box-  
stove stood by the door, huge blotches of  
tobacco sticking to its sides as a souvenir

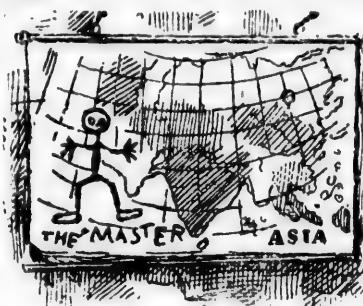
## DOLLY.

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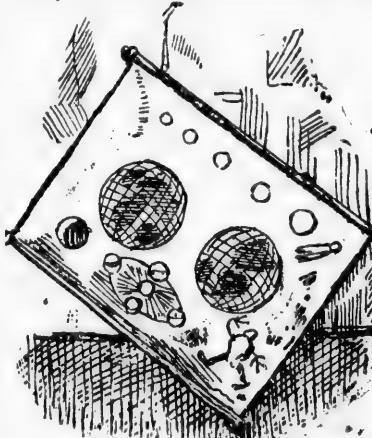
of the last meeting of the township coun-  
cil. The pine desks had been "whittled"  
until their tops were not over six inches



wide, and the seats were all the same  
height, though big and little boys and  
girls had to use them. Maps of Europe,  
Asia, Africa and America, marred by

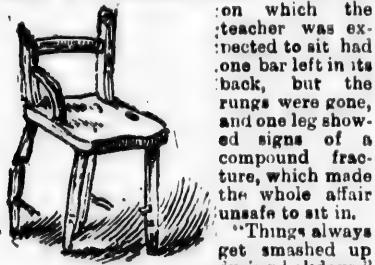


charcoal sketches, hung ragged on the  
walls, and a tattered shred behind the



door represents Canada as it was before

confederation. Behind the teacher's desk a chart of the world, dim with age and spotted over with "cuds" of tobacco, hung by one corner over a blackboard which had long ceased to be black. The teacher's desk itself was a curiosity. When Dolly unlocked it and lifted the cover, it came apart and revealed a chaos of chalk, old copy books, and empty ink bottles. The register and class books were there, and on the tattered cover of the former were some very uncomplimentary and exceedingly obscene references to a departed teacher. The chair

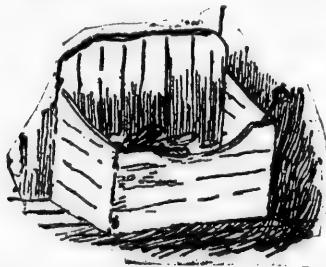


on which the teacher was expected to sit had one bar left in its back, but the rungs were gone, and one leg showed signs of a compound fracture, which made the whole affair unsafe to sit in.

"Things always get smashed up during holidays,"

explained Dolly, as she saw the look of disgust on Lucien's face. "Pappie will have things fixed up after you get started."

"What is that?" asked Lucien, pointing to a huge box in the corner.



"Why, don't you know? That is the wood box! The last teacher had an awful fight with the big boys right after he came, and they put him in there," and Dolly laughed as she pointed out where the boys seized the "master" and carried him down to the box. Malon Klimmer was the ringleader of the boys, and he is awfully rough and strong. But it is a better time to take up school now, for the big boys don't start in till winter, and by that time the teacher has the school in order."

"I'm not afraid of the wood-box, Miss

Felder. I guess I can take my own part with the biggest of them."

"Do you see that broken desk over there?" asked Dolly, pointing to where a fragment remained of what had once been a desk. "Well, when Sam Bougner was trustee he came and complained to the teacher because his boy was whipped, and they had a dispute, and he grabbed Mr. Teacher and threw him against the desk and broke it all to pieces. They are talking of a new school house, so they have never bothered getting it fixed." Dolly seemed to take a malicious pleasure in these reminiscences, but Lucien only laughed as if he would rather have an experience of that kind than not.

"It doesn't seem like a proper place to educate children," said he. "They should get some idea of cleanliness and beauty at school, but instead of that, this outhouse can impress on them nothing but filth and discomfort."

"I've often told Pappie that," said Dolly, earnestly, "but Peter Klimmer says a good schoolhouse would make the children proud, and teach them to want to leave the farm and go to town. He would have the schoolhouse painted red, like the one they had before this, and I think it is just hideous."

As they went home Dolly and he talked of colors and artistic things, and he discovered that she had excellent taste, though he still wondered who it was made the ugly fancy work for the spare bedroom.

Jo Felder was absent that night, and Lucien and Dolly sat by the piano, and she sang for him, and he talked about music and the theaters, but he said nothing of his past life. Dolly wondered, but asked no questions, and when she bade him good night she smiled kindly and hoped that the Feldersburg school children wouldn't trouble his dreams.

They didn't, but long after the house was silent the yellow moon shone on his pale, set face as he sat gazing out of the window. And as the night wore on, and the moon no longer brightened the room, he sat there still, his arms folded on the window-sill, and his head resting on his arms, thinking, thinking, and sometimes approaching that ever-open door between pride and happiness—repentance.

## CHAPTER XII.

### LUCIEN AS A SCHOOLMASTER.

At half-past eight next morning Lucien Strange strolled with studied unconcern through the village, and was stared at by the knot of loungers on the "stoop" of the little store, and the farmers waiting in the blacksmith shop came to the door to

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look at the new schoolmaster. The re-  
marks he heard passed on his appearance  
and "cityified" style were not altogether  
complimentary, but he succeeded in im-  
pressing Eldersburg with the idea that  
he was capable of taking his own part.

When he turned into the gate and pick-  
ed his way along the dilapidated board-  
walk, every game of marbles and shinny  
and ball stooped at once and the children  
stood with open mouths staring at the  
"new master." Children are good and  
quick judges of character, and before  
Lucien had passed the schoolhouse door  
little groups were discussing the prospects  
of his administration, and the general  
verdict was that the new master would be  
"cross." This term school children in-  
variably apply to the teacher who insists  
on order and maintains proper discipline,  
and in this not uncomplimentary sense  
they applied it to Lucien.

When Strange entered the school-room  
the larger girls were sitting at the desks  
they had pre-empted. They looked shyly  
at the handsome youth, but while he bent  
over his desk trying to get its interior in  
order, he distinctly heard three or four  
half-suppressed giggles. He paid no attention,  
but kept on piling the empty ink  
bottles on the floor. Pausing once, he  
looked with dismay at his dust covered  
hands, and just then he heard a couple of  
well defined giggles. This was unpleas-  
ant, but he renewed his task and had the  
desk emptied, when a gurlish voice at his  
elbow said, "If you please we will dust  
out your desk for you."

Lucien looked up gratefully, and saw a  
couple of girls of sweet sixteen standing  
beside him. "Thank you ever so much.  
It is frightfully dirty, and I dislike dirt."

The girls blushed as Lucien's steady  
eyes met theirs, and at once began the  
work of cleaning out the desk, while the  
other misses giggled and ate harvest ap-  
ples, every once in awhile breaking  
out in loud discussion and then suddenly  
quieting down as they remembered that  
"the master" was watching them.

"I notice that some one was good  
enough to sweep the floor this morning,"  
said Lucien.

"Kitty and me did," exclaimed one of  
the girls at the desk.

Lucien put on his most fascinating  
smile as he answered: "Well, my little  
friend, 'Kitty and me did' is not very  
good grammar, but I thank you sincerely for  
being so kind and thoughtful."

"Ma told me to, and Jenny said to  
be sure and clean your desk, but we  
were afraid to for fear you wouldn't like  
it, because Jenny said you were—" Here  
the speaker stopped suddenly and blushed  
like a peony; but Lucien, overlooking the

unfinished and perhaps uncomplimentary  
reference to himself, inquired blandly:

"Pray, what is your name, so that I  
can send a note of thanks to those who  
were so good as to ask you to help me?"

"Hettie Hill," blushed the girl, "and  
her name is Kitty Watson."

"Oh, I know now," said Lucien, gaily;  
"you are Miss Jenny's sister. Tell her  
for me that I'll never forget her kindness  
in remembering me and helping to fix up  
the school-house."

"I guess somebody's stole the bell,"  
interrupted Kitty.

"Why, what will I do?" exclaimed  
Lucien, as he looked nervously around.

"The last master pounded on the door  
with his ruler," suggested Kitty.

Looking at his watch, Lucien found  
that it was nine o'clock, and taking a  
piece of wood which formerly had been a  
part of his desk he went down to the door  
and rapped vigorously. The scholars all  
responded to the call, and in a moment  
were crowding one another through  
the door. Hats and caps were flung on  
the dinner pails which crowded the shelf,  
and the boys naturally took one side of  
the house and left the other for the girls.  
Lucien was congratulating himself that  
the school was about to organize itself  
when he noticed four of the larger boys  
engaged in a violent altercation at one of  
the desks. Blows succeeded words so  
quickly that before Lucien could reach  
them the combatants had grappled with  
each other and the whole four were on the  
floor, biting and kicking like so many  
dogs. Lucien pounded the desk with his  
ruler and shouted, "Take your seats  
and stay there, everyone of you!"  
and then with a bound he was  
in the middle of the fight and had two of  
the boys by the collar. Throwing them  
in opposite directions he seized the other  
two, and jerking them from the floor,  
shook them as a terrier shakes a rat,  
"What do you mean," he hissed between  
his teeth, "fighting like this?"

The boys stood in sullen silence till he  
seized one of them by the arm and de-  
manded an explanation.

"Bill and me put our books in this  
desk first thing this mornin' and sed  
it was our'n and we was only  
sittin' down in it when them fellers tried to  
shove us out!" As the boy gave this ex-  
planation he glared viciously at the two  
who had raised the row.

"We had this desk when tuther master  
was here, and hev a right to it," growled  
one of the other faction.

"No, you didn't," shouted the first  
speaker, "the last master caught you  
chawin' terbaccer and spittin' down that  
knot-hole, and put you out'n thar."

"And please sir," added the last speaker's partner, "that's wot they want it fur now! They both chaw and want this desk so they kin spit through the knot-hole."

"Neither of you can have the desk," was Lucien's decision, as he marched the culprits into front seats, "and if I see any more fighting I will whip the whole batch of you."

Everyone dropped into his or her seat, and when Lucien reached his desk and turned and looked over the school, between fifty and sixty faces were gazing intently at the new master. Turning over the first page of the register, he rapped on the desk and called out "Stand up." Then he read the short and simple prayer, provided by the provincial authorities, and every child was silent and overawed as his deep voice repeated the sacred words. It was something new at the Fellersburg school, and Lucien gained at once a half-clerical influence over his little band. After the prayer he kept the pupils standing while he talked to them. His words were firm, but kind, and as he spoke Dolly's face and her advice were both before him. He told them he hoped each boy and girl would be his friend before a week was past. He was anxious to follow the system on which the school had been heretofore conducted, and that what changes he made would not disturb or frighten his little friends. One thing he would have, if he had to fight it out with each pupil, and that was obedience. When he told them to do anything, they not only had to do it, but they had to do it at once, instantaneously, or he would know the reason why. Then he called the roll, and proceeded with the classes. For some reason the children played no tricks on him, and when night came every class was organized and lessons assigned for the morrow.

The children were afraid of those dark, steady eyes, and they liked the "new master," and vied with each other in trying to please him. During the short intermissions he showed some of the boys a new way to wrestle, and asked them to throw a "hot" ball he could not catch. He lifted big sticks of cordwood and held them out at arm's length, and with a big glass alley knocked marbles out of the ring in a way that surprised the little boys. He promised to teach the big lads how to box, and at night Lucien Strange was the beau ideal of all the girls and boys of Fellersburg. When they went home from school they boasted of his strength and skill, of the beautiful headlines he wrote in their copy books, of how he could add sums in his head, and the stories he told about the countries they were to study in their geography. The consequence was that their big brothers were jealous and

the old men hoped the new master wasn't a "smart-a."

Lucien knew that he had captured the hearts of the children, and his chief hope was that Dolly would hear of it. He wondered that he had succeeded so well, but in his heart he thanked Dolly for it. All day he had exerted himself to be pleasant; he couldn't remember if he had ever before said such clever and entertaining things as he had dis- coured to the Fellersburg children, and he recollects that all the time he had been talking for Dolly and hoping that she would hear how well he had got along.

He thought, too, of Peter Klimmer's chagrin when he heard that the new master was a success, and the pleasure Sadie would feel, and even Rene Watson's praise came to his mind, but he knew he had tried to be popular because he thought Dolly would like him better for it.

When he got back to Jo Felder's he wandered around the verandah, hoping to see Dolly and tell her of his success, but no Dolly was to be seen. He went to his room and washed and smoothed his hair and looked out of the window, and there was Dolly, surrounded by a bevy of children, coming home from the village. He knew they would tell her how well he had succeeded, and he managed to be sitting on the verandah when she came in.

When Dolly came to where he was resting she leaned against the railing and inquired how he had passed the day.

Lucien was disappointed. His soul hungered for a little praise, and it chilled him to think that maybe the children had not been as pleased as he had hoped.

"Much better than I expected, thank you for your advice," he answered with a please-say-something-kind look on his face.

"Did you lock the school-house door?" asked Dolly.

"No. Am I expected to?"

"Certainly. Pappie went up and opened the door this morning, but you were expected to lock up. I forgot to tell you."

"But where is the key?" asked Lucien anxiously.

"Here it is," answered Dolly, taking from her pocket.

"Well, I guess I had better go and lock the door," muttered Lucien awkwardly, as he rose to go.

"Never mind to-night. I was up the village, and went over and locked myself, but you will have to take care of it in future," and Dolly handed him the key.

"Thank you. It was very kind. I

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deed, everybody has been indulgent with  
me to-day."

" You had better be careful," added the  
smileless Dolly, " for the storekeeper  
told me that Peter Klimmer was  
in there, and told him that you  
were out in the playground teaching  
the boys how to fight, and that you said  
you could whip anybody in Feldersburg."

Lucien was thunderstruck. Already  
his triumph was turning into ashes.  
" Why, I never said such a thing, and I  
was only showing the boys how to box. I  
was taught it at school, and it is entirely  
proper."

" And Peter says he heard you were  
flirting with the big girls," remarked  
the inexorable Dolly.

" What?" cried Lucien.

" Flirting with the big girls," repeated  
Dolly.

" Why, it is monstrous," shouted  
Lucien.

" May be it is, but I warn you that you  
cannot do anything that will seem good  
in Peter Klimmer's eyes, and that every-  
thing will be misconstrued. One day's  
success with the children may mean a  
good deal or nothing. If you keep it up  
the parents will fall into line, but if not,  
your troubles are yet to come. But I  
must go and help mammy get supper,"  
and Dolly tripped away without giving  
Lucien a single word of encouragement or  
comfort.

Angry and mortified, he sat and glared  
at the apple trees, and when he was  
called to supper, he had just about de-  
cided that it was no use trying to please  
the heathens he had engaged to serve.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### FELDER EXPRESSES HIS VIEWS REGARD- ING PRAYER.

At supper, Joe Felder eyed Lucien curi-  
ously. Dolly, however, was exceedingly  
merry, and as Mrs. Felder had only once  
referred to the pain in her shoulder, the  
meal passed off very pleasantly. But the  
moment Lucien placed his chair on the  
verandah, and Jo's pipe had been lit, Dolly remarked:

" Pappie is just bursting with some-  
thing, and ten chances to one you are in  
it, Mr. Strange."

Joe affected not to hear this remark, but  
turning to Lucien, enquired: " Air you of  
religious turn?"

" I hardly understand what you mean,  
Mr. Felder?"

" Do you belong to a church and go to  
meetin' regular, and live up to yer creed?"  
asked Jo between the whiffs of smoke  
which came at intervals from under his  
gray moustache.

" Well, no," answered Lucien, " I  
haven't been at church for a long while,  
and I never was a member."

" Do you say yer prayers afore you go  
to bed at night and when ye git up in the  
mornin'?" continued Jo, solemnly.

" No—I confess I do not, though my  
mother taught me to," replied Lucien, sadly.

" Then what made ye open school with  
prayers this mornin'?" As he said this  
Jo looked sharply at Lucien.

" Indeed I hardly know, but I supposed  
it was the rule," stammered Lucien, who  
saw at once the trap into which he had  
been led.

" D'y'e think it's right to do that sort of  
thing just because it's the rule?"

" Well, surely there was no harm in it.  
It is a simple yet beautiful little prayer,  
and it seems to me a good way of opening  
school. It is solemn and impressive, and  
at least tends to make the children feel  
that there is something beside balls and  
marbles."

" Then," said Jo, in a rather contemptuous  
tone, " you did it just as you'd ring  
the bell or hear a jogrify class, eh?"

" No, I don't know as I did. The  
prayer made me feel better, and I believe  
that the children felt it as well," argued  
Lucien.

" Mebbe, mebbe!" soliloquized Jo,  
" but while that is the result at the moment,  
what is the lastin' result? Ain't it  
to make the young 'uns think that prayer  
is a farce? Don't ye think it is that sort  
of thing that breeds contempt for religion  
and works heaps of evil in the end?"

Lucien said he had never looked at it in  
that light.

" Well, I hev, young man, and when I  
heerd that you'd read prayers this mornin'  
in the school, I kind of lost my holt on  
ye. I was afeered mebbe you was a hip-  
percrit, as I hadn't seen much religion in  
ye about the house. And I tell ye I don't  
tie no how to a man who prays when  
there's people around and don't ever do it  
when he's alone."

Lucien's face flushed hotly as he heard  
this. " I am sure Mr. Felder that I am  
not accustomed to act the part of a hypocrite,  
and to-day I acted for the best and  
without any idea of making people believe  
that I am good, or any better than I am."

" I didn't say ye did," said Jo, " men  
of your age ain't generally old enough to  
be perfessional and practiced hypocrites.  
But doin' and sayin' things ye don't be-  
lieve in, and seein' how well they take,  
breeds that sort of thing. I knew how it  
was myself. I got doin' this thing and  
that thing because people expected me to,  
till finally I was skeered to look at eny-  
one fur fear I would do or say the wrong

thing. What I thought out fur myself waint nuthin'. I was allways tryin to do as other people thought, and did till I took a drop on myself and sed I guessed I'd try and do right and let people go their own way, and I'd go mine. They call me an inidel now, but I haint, and it don't bother me."

Lucien felt confused, and he had a guilty sense that he had opened school with prayer in order to impress the children and get time to gather himself together. "You have taken me at a disadvantage," he said, "but I think that I felt as prayerful this morning as I ever did in my life. My new surroundings and the troubles I expected made that appeal to a higher power restful and comforting to me. And as to praying when one is not in a prayerful mood, I think it is right enough; if not, people would seldom pray."

"Yes, but it'd be prayer when they did pray, not a lot of words groaned out with ther eyes shut," interrupted Jo.

"But, Mr. Felder," said Lucien argumentatively, "children are taught to pray, and certainly they cannot feel the meaning of what they say or appreciate the humility and reverence they should feel when approaching their Maker. Yet they would never acquire the habit of prayer or feel its comforting influences unless they were taught to pray while they were young."

Jo jerked his pipe from his mouth and turned sharply, almost angrily, to Lucien, as he exclaimed: "Don't talk like that to me if ye want me to think well of ye? Why, dang it, man, ye talk about learnin' a child to pray as if it hed to be taught the same as it is taught to blow soap bubbles and read and write. I tell ye it's as natural for a human bein' to pray, when the right time comes, as it is for a young 'un to eat and sleep, and to call fer its mother when it's sick or afered. But folks go learnin' a child to pray when it hain't nuthin' to pray fer, and don't know who it is prayin' to. And then ye said it got the child in the 'habit'? If it is a habit it can't be much good."

"No doubt I expressed myself rather clumsily, and I can see that what you say is largely true," said Lucien quietly. "But the fact remains that we are all creatures of habit, and it is very important for our parents to start us going right, and to teach us of the existence of a God and impress us with the fact that when we appeal to Him properly we will be heard. If this was not implanted in us and made, to a certain extent, a habit, I think this would grow to be a godless people."

"There ye go! There ye go! Jist like all the rest of 'em! You'd ruther hav prayer and church goin' and religion a

habit like usin' terbaccy and drinkin' whisky than hav it a result of reason and a kind of reachin' out after help from God, and peace and rest, and to git a grip on sumthin' that'll stay and kin be depended on? D'y'e gather my meanin', young feller?"

"I think so," answered Lucien, "but I imagine that the habit of prayer and church-going leads up to the heartfelt seeking for peace and consolation from God. It seems to me that those who are entirely strangers in God's house, and unused to prayer, are also strangers to either a love or fear of Him."

"Yer wrong, young man, honestly wrong, mebbe, but danged wrong!" exclaimed Jo, who was thoroughly aroused. "The more a man git into the religious 'habit' the more unlikely he is ever to git within sight or hearin' of God. I haint talkin' about Christians, real Christians, now, but about them as hain't nuthin' but the 'habit' that yer settin' sich store by. These 'habit' fellers think they hav got all there is of religion, and kinder git the notion that it haint much. When they git into a hole and troubles is round 'em, what do they do? Go to God with their afflictions? No they don't, no they don't, they go to the devil with it; yes they do!"

"I never noticed it, but what you say may be true. How do you account for it?"

"How do I account for it? I thought a schoolmaster like you'd been able to see the p'int to onc'e. Why, they say to themselves, we've tried religion and there hain't nuthin' in it, and they see a way out, across the devil's half-acre, and away they go. Now, a bad man, or a man who hain't either a Christian ner got the religious habit, he get into trouble, and he sez to hisself to onc'e, this is on account of me livin' the way I've been doin'. He hain't got neborred sanctity, and he gives up and sez, I'll hev to be better'n this. If his wife or young 'un dies he wants consolation, and if a preacher strikes a feller of that kind and strikes him right, he'll be the makings of a good Christian. Of course," explained Jo, sitting back in his chair, "some people, when they hev death in their family, get into a sort of funk, and make a ter'ble fuss, when, for fact, they don't care a straw except for the expense of the funeral or the inconvenience it'll be, gettin' along without'n who ever's gone. Sich people as that hain't never Christians, because a man, or woman either, who can't sorcer for a dear one without'n thinkin' of themselves, can't now understand the tears Christ shed, ner get hold of the idea of His sacrifice. True Christians is big-hearted

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people, yer 'habit' Christians is the meanest kind of truck; they want to stand in with God and make money out'n servin' the devil, and wuen it comes to makin' a choice between religion and hope, or money and prosperity and the devil, they grab for the cash. Oh, yes, they do. I've seen 'em time and again, and its allus the same—allus the same."

"But where are the churches to get hold of what you call 'good Christians' if not from habitual church-goers and those who have been taught to pray even as a habit?" asked Lucien, who began to see the line Jo was taking.

"Why, where did Christ get His followers? Not from among them that made religion a perfesyon, did He? Not by a blamed site, He didn't. He couldn't trust 'em. He knew what they thought about religion, that it was good 'nuff to make a livin' out'n. He knew them Pharisees and Sadducees was makin' a bizness out'n religion, and that He hed to offer 'em better terms or hew them agin Him, and agin Him they was. Say," said Jo, sinking his voice, "did ye ever notice that Christ picked out perfesional bad men ruther'n perfesional good men for His own following. No! Never noticed it? Well, it's so; Publicans and sinners and fast women and fishermen and all that sort. Say, did ye notice how He took to the fishermen? No. Well He did, and why? Did ye ever know many fellers that made their livin' fishin'?"

Lucien admitted that the few with whom he was acquainted were pretty hard cases.

"Of course, they are allus swearin' and cussin' and dammin', and drinkin', but true friends, and I s'pose that the Galilee fishin' crowd was about the same, fer every bizness that depends on luck breeds a tough crowd. But they made good Christians, didn't they? Their taste hadn't been spiled by the habit of continuous gunnin' on bogus religion. I wonder if Judas was a fisherman? Don't believe he was! I opinion that he was a preacher's son."

"What makes you think that he was a preacher's son?" asked Lucien with a smile.

"Because they're a bad lot," answered Jo. "They see so much religion that is lived and worked on fer a salary, that they git an idear that ther haint nuthin' to it, and tura out the toughest kind of toughs. They're the wust, swearin'est, lyin' lot I ever know'd. But some on 'em, after they git bad enough, begin to forget perfesional Christianity and hanker after the real thing, and by'n-by these

fellers brace up and make good, bright Christians, and hew some sympathy with us irregular fellers. I guess ther haint any better example of what habitual religion'll do fer a boy than the hull class of preachers' sons."

Lucien had been thinking of all the preachers' sons among his acquaintances, and was forced to admit that they were a very hard lot.

"And most on 'em hew good fathers and mothers, too, but it's over-did with 'em. There's a heap of trouble caused that way," and as Jo said this he moved down in his seat till his head rested on the high back of the chair. "My mother was a ter'ble good woman, lovin' and kind, and allus shelterin' me from father's lickins', but she over-did the religious teachin' part. I recollect when I wa'n't more'n five years old how she taught me to say, 'Now I lay me down ter sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep!' I hated to bother sayin' it, and used ter try and slip off to bed without'n kneelin' down. She was skeered, poor mother was, that I was growin' up wrong, and used to tell me if I died in the night, if I had gone ter bed without'n sayin' that prayer, that God would put me in the bad place and burn me forever. Then when that didn't work she said that God often made little boys die in bed 'cause they'd gone ter bed without'n sayin' ther prayer, and then dropped 'em ker splash in the lake of fire and brimstone. After that I used to be skeered to go ter bed afore I sed 'Now I lay me,' but bime-by I said I guessed it'd be just as good if I sed it after I got under the blankets, and I tried that on till she found it out, and told me that boys who didn't keer enough fer to say ther prayer on ther knees aside the bed, would likely git took, and ther prayer pass as no account. Then I was askeezed to say 'Now I lay me' in bed, and fer a long while kneit on the cold floor and sed it. One night I forgot, and it was awful cold, and I guessed the Lord wouldn't mind if I sed it a-layin' down. But I wa'n't satisfied, and my conscience made me get up and kneel in the bed, and even then I wa'n't settled but mebbe I'd get tuck away and burned fer not sayin' it right, so I got up and kneeled on the cold floor, and sed it awful fast, and climbed back in. Then I begun to think mebbe I'd sed it too fast, and hed skipped sum words, and I couldn't go to sleep till I got out'n the bed and sed it slow, and waited till I drew three breaths before I sed 'Amen.' Then I was satisfied. But next night it was cold, and I kneeled and sed it fast, and managed to get to sleep, and found next morn'n that I hadn't been took. Next night was

colder'n ever, and I forgot till I got inter bed, and I kneeled under the quilts and sed it, and next mornin' woke up all right. Then I guessed I'd lay down and say it, and as I wasn't took in the night, I guessed mother was wrong, and sed it that way far quite a spell, and then I commenced ter fall off ter sleep without n sayin' it at all, and woke up all right, and after that I forgot all about my prayers, 'ceptn' when mother came in an' heard 'em. Now, what did mother's overdooin' that talk about me prayin' do for me? It shuck my confidence in her teachin', and made me guess b't prayin' was only for boys that could be skeered."

Lucien had listened attentively, and he comprehended how, in a conscientious and impressionable nature such as Jo Feller's, that the slightest deceit would result as he had stated. He finally asked: "What lesson do you learn from all this?"

"Jist this," said Jo. "Don't let religion or prayer git to be a cloak or habit. If it don't, when a crisis comes in a man's life, he will turn to God for help, and it'll be genuine when he calls for mercy and divine grace. Sich a time allers comes to a man, but if he's been spiled by thinkin' he's got all the religion that can be had, the crisis drives him t'other way, and he goes to the devil a whoopin'."

Silence fell on the little group. Dolly sat on the floor, leaning her head against her father's arm, and every once in a while the big, rough hand was passed tenderly over the short curls and soft cheek of the silent little girl. Lucien saw that with all his penetration he had never inquired into those better motives which prompt the noblest men and women to be different to their fellows. The clouds floated before the shining face of the moon, and then the bright yellow beams shone through the Virginia creepers which shaded the porch, and made mottled shadows on the fair, sweet face of Dolly as she caressed her father's big brown hand. Between father and daughter there was no word needed; they understood each other, and their faith in each other was like a great, sheltering mountain. Down in the orchard in the valley, the river was murmuring and rippling and sighing; the night wind was whispering among the trees, and He who from day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge, spoke to them and told of the mysteries of creation and the wealth of His love.

"Young man," spoke Jo, slowly, "don't think that I scoff at religion or lack faith in God because I spoke as I did. Dolly reads a chapter from the Bible to me every night—don't you, Dolly, sweet?—

and I worship in my own way. But be jinuino, boy, be jinuino, and pertend nuthin'. Do it fer yer own eske, if nuthin' else. Pertendin' will make ye a hipper-crit, and bein' a hipper-crit 'll spile ye fer bein' a man, and 'll make ye miserable even as a human critter."

As Jo said this he rose, and, patting Dolly on the head, said "Good-night." Dolly followed him at once, and hours later Lucien went to bed, a thoroughly unhappy and less conceited young man.

#### CHAPTER XIV

"AND SO THE TIDE ALWAYS .88 AND FLOWS."

The next day was dark and rainy. Lucien rose in the morning with a headache and a bitter consciousness that his selfishness and egotism had become miserably apparent to Jo Feller and Dolly. The hired girl waited on the breakfast table and Dolly's face was missing.

"Dolly's mother is feelin' poorly this mornin'," exclaimed Jo, and, as if he too were irritated by her absence, said no more. The meal passed in silence, Lucien returned to his room feeling intensely miserable. At eight o'clock he started for the school. The children had not yet begun to arrive, and he sat at his desk listening to the rain and watching the drops leak through the roof and splatter down on the rusty stove. He decided that no matter what the children thought of his sudden change, he would omit the prayers. It seemed useless for him to try to be pleasant and popular, he reasoned, his best actions were misconstrued and the only man in the neighborhood for whose good opinion he cared, suspected him of being a hypocrite. "Yes, I be jinuino," was Lucien's bitter thought, and "see how they will like that."

Slowly the dripping children began to fill the room and baskets and dinner pails and wet wraps were heaped on the shelves. Lucien had a smile for no one and the sharp voices of disputants showed that the youngsters were less in awe of the "new master" than they were the day before. Sharply at nine Lucien seized the ruler and smote the door in an angry sort of way. All the children were already indoors but they found their seats slowly. Angered by this Lucien rapped sharply on his desk and in an instant every pupil was in place and standing up ready for prayers. Lucien saw at once that he was in an awkward dilemma and took the easiest way out of it. Though he had resolved to omit it he turned over the cover of the register and commenced to read the prayer, but alas, he had the wrong cover and it was the evening petition which he

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## XIV

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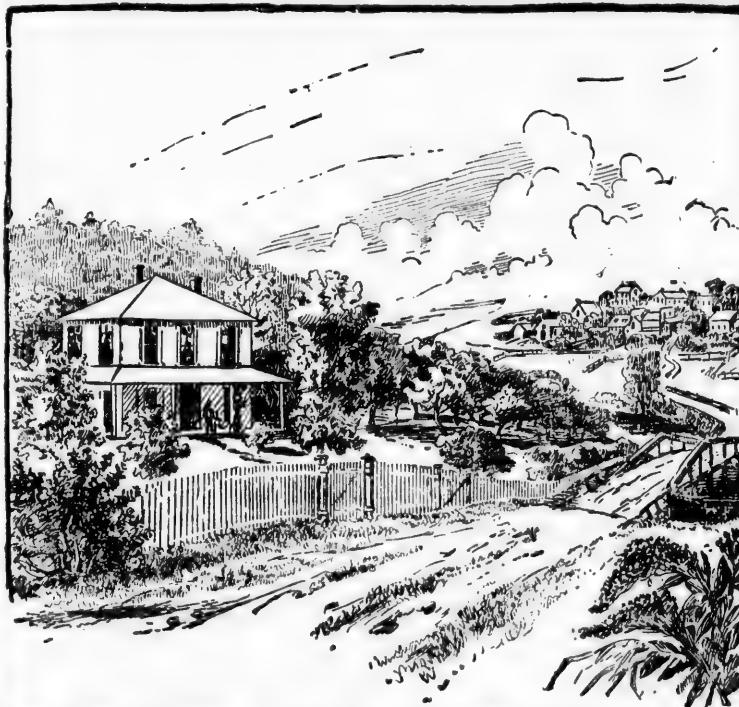
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offered up. Before he had read a half dozen lines he found his mistake and imagined that every child in the room had also discovered his stupid error. However, he kept on to the finish and was quite surprised to find that no one had laughed aloud. When he looked up he saw four or five of the larger girls engaged in a convulsive giggle, and supposed at once that his mistake was the cause. He spoke sharply to them, and in his vexation forgot to call the roll, calling instead on one of the classes. Some of his pupils looked significantly at each other, and

conflict with the answer given by the "last teacher" to the same question.

Lucien retorted angrily that he didn't care what the last teacher had said and did not propose to have him eternally quoted as the rule by which everything ought to be done. The teacher's ill-temper was contagious and nothing went right. The rain poured down and when the short intermission for play came the youngsters couldn't go outside, and the schoolhouse was like a bedlam. Lucien fairly hated those noisy boys and giggling girls, and sat and glared at them over his desk. So



Lucien knew the reason. As the class came forward the big boys jostled one another, the girls pinched their neighbors and laughed, and Lucien was fast losing what little good temper he had saved from the day before.

He had not asked his class half a dozen questions when they began to tell him that "the last teacher" hadn't asked questions in that way. This made matters worse, but shortly afterwards when one of his pupils asked him a question, his answer was at once alleged to be in direct

the day wore along, and he wrote copies and taught the little ones their letters and the bigger ones mathematics as if he despised the task, and the scholars likewise did their work as if they hated it. Kitty Watson and Hettie Hill had not dared to approach Lucien, and he thought they, too, had repented of their attempt to be kind and helpful.

At last three o'clock came, and Lucien had disposed of all his classes, and there was still an hour left before he could dismiss the school. An idea struck him,

and calling to Hettie and Kitty he asked them to take a moist cloth and clean off the blackboard. When this was done he took a piece of chalk and with rapid strokes sketched a picture on the board. The children watched him with open mouths as they saw the sketch grow into an accurate and striking picture of Feldersburg, with the valley, and the river, and Jo Felder's house, and the orchard, and the wooded hill behind. When he had finished he turned and said: "It is a wet day, and we are all out of humor, so I have made a picture for you. Do you know the place it represents?" The boy who had been the chief sinner in quoting the "last teacher" sung out: "I do; it's Feldersburg."

"Well, then, come up here and explain the picture to the school."

The boy said he couldn't. Lucien sharply ordered him to come up to the platform, and as the lad stumbled forward he was such a picture of awkwardness that Lucien couldn't resist an ill-natured impulse to make him feel worse. "Now," said he, "you have been telling me all day what the 'last teacher' did, and as you think yourself so smart you can tell the school the names of the roads and river, and all about everything."

The boy couldn't find a place to begin until Lucien supplied him with a starting point, and then the scholars roared at his clumsy attempts to describe the features of the village, so he was sent to his seat. A little girl was then given the pointer and told to give the names and directions and the general description of the roads and people. She blushed, but got along very nicely; and when she was through Lucien made the awkward boy's face crimson while he compared the failure of the lad and the success of the little girl. "You've often had the headline in your copybook, 'Comparisons are odious.' Now you have had a little taste of how disagreeable it is to be continually compared with someone else. And my boy," said Lucien, "your failure rose out of trying to talk differently at the blackboard than you do to your playfellows. If you had stood before that sketch with no one in the room excepting Kitty or Hattie you would have said: 'That is the road leading to Belkton; that is Potter's store; this is the bridge over the river, and that is Jo Felder's. Be natural and not afraid, and you will be all right.' " Lucien then pointed out the various objects, and without speaking their names had the children write them down on their slates. The result was curious, and when Lucien ranged the pupils in a row and read out the words and spelling from the various slates the children roared.

Before the object and spelling lesson was over it was nearly five o'clock, and the youngsters hurried home, and as their excuse for the lateness of their arrival told with wonderful elaborations of the funny lesson they had had, and how awfully "queer" the new master was.

Lucien went home disheartened and disgusted. In half an hour Jo came in from the village, where he had spent the afternoon sitting on the counter of the grocery store arguing politics and religion with his neighbors. Lucien lay on the lounge in the rag-carpeted sitting room, tired and sour.

"What was ye doin' to the young uns that ye kept them in so late?" inquired Jo, good-naturedly.

"Trying to teach them something," snapped Lucien.

"I was settin' in the store when one of the big boys cum in, and he was tellin' about some pictur' of Feldersburg you put on the blackboard, and how ye made the scholars tell what it was and all about it, and danged if I didn't think it was a mighty good way of teachin', but Peter Klummer he said that was the way you was wastin' the young uns' time. Then a lot uv us went over and looked through the winder at the pictur', and blamed if it isn't the cutest thing I ever saw, but Peter is down on it. That's the way young fellers with good idears are spiled; the old heads won't hey no new ways of teachin', and the schoolmasters git to be reg'lar machines. I say, I wish ter-morrer you'd ask the jog'ryfy class who is reeve of this township, and who is councillors, and how many acres ther is in it, and what the assessment is, and how many townships there is in the county, and who is warden, and who air the county officials, and what salaries they git. I'll give ye a list from a county atlas I subscribed fer. I bet ther hain't one as knows a thing about it, though like enuff they kin tell ye the capitals of all the countries in Europe, Asia 'n Africry. And I'll bet they don't know nuttin' about our government, and what's worse, half of them never learn, though they go on votin' and gabbin' about Grits and Tories, and how much better our kind of government is than that of the United States, an' they don't know any more about the system of runnin' the States than the babies in yer A B C class. The school system is wrong; they dont teach the children anythin' that's worth knowin', except readin', writin', an' 'rithmetic, and waste away a heap of time on aligibry and g'ometry and things that don't do no good?"

Lucien wearily assented, and Jo went on: "Ask sum of them big boys what they want to make uv themselves and I'll

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bet everyone of 'm 'll snicker and say,  
'Nuthin.' Ask 'em if they ever expect  
to be reeve of the township or warden of  
the county or member of parliament, and  
there won't be one on 'em 'll own up to  
havin' ambition enough to try to be a  
pound-keeper. Thet haint right. A boy  
oughter feel when he's at school that  
he's preparin' hisself for authin', most of  
all fer to be a good, reasonable citizen,  
with sense enuff to help run the township  
intelligently. And then look at the  
school inspectors—appointed for life—  
the same old plugs go round examinin'  
the schools year after year, and never  
givin' the schoolmasters a new idea. They  
ought to be elected for a short term from  
among the best teachers with the highest  
stiffcuts, and changed often enough to  
bring new blood and new ideas into the  
bizness."

"Tea is ready," cried Dolly, looking  
through the door. "Are you telling Mr.  
Strange how to teach school, Pappie?  
You know, Mr. Strange, Pappie has  
theories of his own about every-  
thing, and he says everybody ought  
to have."

Lucien was silent and constrained, and  
Dolly and her father were inclined to let  
him have his way, but Mrs. Felder, who  
was one of those unfortunate women who  
always persist in talking when silence is  
desired, began to expatiate on the effect  
wet weather had on the pain in her shoul-  
der-blade. Lucien listened with polite  
attention, and Mrs. Felder drifted into a  
description of all the ailments from which  
she had suffered, and from that into the  
strange and fatal illnesses which had oc-  
curred in Fellersburg for the past thirty  
years. On the subject of sickness and  
death Mrs. Felder was always fluent, if  
not eloquent, and deathbed scenes and  
symptoms which preceded the last awful  
moment were her strong point.

"Then there was Hanner Spry—Hanner  
Smith as was 'fore she married Jonas  
Spry—I was with her when she died, poor  
critter. All four on her sisters was there  
—three on 'em married, with their hus-  
band, and Jenet, who was single, poor  
thing, and hain't ever been married since  
—and the doctor standin' by; couldn't  
do nothin' fer she was past help; and  
her husband takin' on ter'ble—though he  
was married in eleven months after—and  
I noticed her a-pickin' at the quilts, and I  
whispered to Jenet, 'I guess she's goin',  
poor thing,' and just then there come a  
gurglin' and her eyes set and turned up  
glassy and awful lookin' like, and her  
arms stiffened out and she was gone, poor  
critter, and left six children, the youngest  
only ten days old, an' I told 'em all at  
the time, sez I, 'It was nuthin' but a-

washin' of her hands in cold water right  
after she'd been poorly, as did it,' and  
what agony she hed, poor critter, just  
like Anne Boughner, up here to the vil-  
lage, not more'n a year ago. I was helpin'  
her through her trouble—"

At this point Dolly interfered. Tea was  
over and Lucien was listening with stony  
attention to these descriptions of mortuary  
circumstances with exemplary attention.  
"Come into the parlor with Pappie and  
I'll play something for you to pass the  
time, as it is too wet to sit on the verandah.  
I'm afraid your deathbed stories, Mammy,  
will break Mr. Strange's rest," smiled  
Dolly, as she turned away.

## CHAPTER XV.

### LUCIEN FINDS THAT HE IS NOT ALONE IN SEARCHING AFTER PEOPLE'S MOTIVES.

"Mammy is a great favorite as a  
nurse," said Dolly, as she put the lamp on  
the piano, "and thinks that there are no  
incidents so marvelous and interesting as  
those connected with 'passing away.' I  
believe she could comfort almost any  
dying sufferer with a story of a death sim-  
ilar to the one about to take place."

"I have been a medical student long  
enough to know that the instincts of the  
nurse are almost purely feminine, and  
that the motherly heart believes that the  
almost entire aim of life is to be of use to  
the sick and dying," answered Lucien,  
kindly.

Dolly looked gratefully at him as if she  
had at last found one who sought a good  
motive for her mother's peculiarities. Lu-  
cien was in favor with Dolly, and he felt  
his heart give an exultant thump when he  
recognized the fact. He sat in a low rock-  
ing-chair while she played and sang. Jo,  
preferring his pipe, was in the kitchen,  
and Lucien had Dolly and her singing to  
himself. She never knew why the  
gusts of wind and rain and the  
presence of that dark and almost  
sinister face prompted her to choose "The  
Land o' the Leal," an unusual song with  
her, but she chose it, and when she had  
finished she turned to him to ask what he  
would like next, and found him with his  
face buried in his hands. He looked up  
at her, his eyes wet with tears. "Per-  
haps that song has painful memories, Mr.  
Strange?" she asked, as she turned over  
the leaves of her music.

"They are sad memories, Miss Dolly.  
It was one of the songs 'my mither sang,'  
and when I hear it I see her as she was  
'fading away.' Excuse my weakness," he  
said, sadly. "I feel so desolate since the  
only one in whom I ever believed, as we  
should believe in God, left me. Since  
then I have never had a friend. I have

had the misfortune of being forced to live within myself ; I have had to confide in myself, and commune with myself, and you and your father have taught me to despise myself, and so I have become discontented and miserable." Lucien's voice choked, though he ended with a feeble attempt at a smile.

" Why do you say we have taught you to despise yourself, Mr. Strange ? "

" Because it is true," he answered, bitterly. " You have pointed out my faults, and laughed at my failings. Your father suspects me of being a hypocrite, and I fear you also think me a shallow, false coxcomb—"

" Why, Mr. Strange ! What has been done to make you imagine such nasty things ? "

" What have you done ? You have ridiculed my conduct, and taunted me with being an unknown and unsought visitor, who might be a forger or a horse-thief, and you have laughed at me trying to be a pattern or even a teacher of piety, and then when I—"

" Mr. Strange, your self-communion has driven you mad," broke in Dolly, sharply. " I have not ridiculed you, nor did I say you might be a forger or a horse-thief. All I said was when you were trying to lecture me, that your own past couldn't escape comment unless you had a certificate of good conduct from the day of your birth up to date. You are morbid, and permit your fancy to run away with you."

" Perhaps I am morbid, and have found a meaning in your words which was not intended. I know I have felt what you said to me more than I otherwise would because you are so gentle and comforting to your father, and so considerate to your mother, while to me you are so cruel, and in your laughing, teasing way say so many things which strike my weaknesses like well-aimed arrows—and—and I think you intend to wound me." He did not speak accusingly or bitterly. His deep voice was full of the painful self-abasement and friendlessness which come to every proud man when he sees the flowers of love bloom for everyone but him, and feels for the first time that he is really unworthy of the love he seeks. To Dolly, the change seemed marvelous, and as she looked at the young man who sat with his face hidden in his hands, she could scarcely realize that it was the haughty and overbearing youth whose self-possession and cynicism had excited her quiet wrath. But Dolly was not quick to yield even in mercy, and rising from her seat at the piano, she said :

" I am sorry, Mr. Strange, that I have

made you miserable, but I will try hereafter to inflict you with less of my society."

As she turned to go Lucien sprang up and barred the way.

" Please stay, Miss Felder," he exclaimed, with trembling voice. " It is because I am so anxious to gain your good-will that I am tormented by the fear that you dislike and distrust me. For years I have not been privileged as the inmate of a happy home. What I have seen of women has been in society : what I have seen of home has been as a stranger at the firesides of those who were not even friends. The little glimpses of a domestic heaven I have had in the tender affection between you and your father, have made me long to share your esteem and kindness. I have never had a sister I love though I have a sister : the only love I ever knew was my mother's, and she is dead. Cannot you forgive me for my rudeness and lack of knowledge of a woman's nature ? Cannot we be friends ? "

Dolly stood watching him, a curious expression in her dark blue eyes.

" Don't you think that you have yourself to blame if, as you say, so little kindness has been to your lot ? "

" Think I would swallow my pride and apologize to you as I have done if I did not blame myself ? Blame myself ? You think I am a hopeless egotist if you imagine that in the dreary years which began in my boyhood I have not asked myself that question a thousand times. But in my student life I said it was better and when men sneered and women laughed I said I didn't care. Now I do care and I have humbled myself and you have nothing better to offer me than the question, ' Don't you blame yourself ? '

Lucien spoke bitterly, and he stepped aside as if to let Dolly pass.

" So you consider it ' humbling your self ' to say that you are unhappy ; or is the special humility shown in the fact that you confess your forlorn condition to an uncultivated country girl ? " There was no coquetry in either Dolly's eyes or voice as she looked squarely into Lucien's face and asked this question. " You had better pause a moment and examine yourself."

Lucien's pale face reddened with vexation. If a positive " no " had come readily to his lips Dolly might have been satisfied with its genuineness, but Lucien felt a pang of self-accusation that to a certain extent Dolly was perhaps right.

" You always try to find a mean motive for everything I say," he said, appealingly. " You are as confident of your ability to please—or to torment—as you set fit, as I am of even my ability to worry

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Felder," he exclaimed. "It is because I gain your good-will by the fear that you

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through the world without friends. Such a question as yours implies either a sense of disparity on your part or else a superiority which you desire to have recognized. I know right well that it is not the former."

"Do you mean that you think I was fishing for compliments?" and Dolly's eyes flashed.

"No," answered Lucien, dryly. "Women of sense never fish for compliments, and men of sense never offer them."

"You know what I meant, and your answer to my question betrays your dishonesty," cried Dolly, angrily, "You avoided a direct reply because you knew your face would belie your words. You would like everyone in Feldersburg to flatter your vanity and amuse you, but you think you have to apologize to your pride for making even the slightest effort to win their regard. I for one do not feel flattered by your 'humility,' and I presume I would not have been favored had I not been the handiest plaything that you saw in sight."

Dolly knew that she had neither been elegant nor discreet in her remarks, and Lucien's steady gaze fixed on her face made her blush with an exasperating smile. He bowed, and said: "You do my youth the unmerited honor of supposing that I have not outlived the age of playthings. I had hoped that you could understand that a man can feel homeless and friendless even when he is well-lodged and sufficiently fed. But you have not yet suffered; and cruel as you are in misjudging me, I hope you may never know what it is to be without a friend who will never be unkind or without comforting words even when you are wrong."

"If your face were as well schooled as your tongue in the arts of society you would be quite irresistible; but I can assure you that it is much harder to impose upon even the 'child of nature' than you think."

"Miss Felder, I had been told that in the country everyone from the city is viewed with distrust and is considered a 'gay deceiver' or confidence operator, but I had hoped that with your broader education you would know that every man who is educated beyond the point of eating potatoes with his knife need not necessarily be a villain."

"Yes, and you," cried the angry Dolly, who thought this was a slur on her father, "may as well know that every man who is not educated up to the point of not eating potatoes with his knife is not necessarily a boor or a fool."

"Dolly! Dolly!" cried Jo, as the door

opened to admit his burly form, "them's

strong words, Dolly—them's angry words, girlie. I hope yer not quarrelin' with the school master. It hain't pretty to quarrel, Dolly," said the kind old man, as he put his arm around Dolly and looked inquiringly at Lucien.

"We weren't quarreling, Pappie—only arguing," laughed Dolly, as she leaned against her father's arm and looked lovingly into his face.

Lucien could see a shadow on Jo's honest face, and he wondered whether the kindly old farmer shared his daughter's suspicion of city people.

"We were discussing the comparative merits of city and country people," said he, "and Miss Dolly was defending her friends very vigorously."

Jo sat down with Dolly beside him and commenced: "Well, I know city folks are smarter than we air in a heap of ways, but country folks is happier and more contented like. And more's that, we're nearer natur' than city people: and when we follow our instincts, like an Injin does his'n, we're so near right that nobody can fool us. But there's a heap of country folks that git ashamed of their style of livin' and thinkin', and even when the instinct they nat' gave 'em tells 'em ther wrong that let city-bred people argy them into most anything."

Lucien wondered if Jo imagined that he had been arguing in this way with Dolly, and he shrewdly suspected that Jo was simply giving voice to his fears.

"Queer about instinct, hain't it? Animals all has it, and people has it more or less, too. Take the Injin; he has more woodcraft in him than a white man can ever learn. Why? Cause he's nearer natur'. He don't depend on reason like a white man, and his instinct gets full swing. But edicate an Injin and ye spoil 'im. The minit his reason begins ter work his instinct quits. Why? Cause when he's got reason he don't need instinct. Then there's wimmen; they hav more instinct than men. Why? Cause they're nearer natur'. They don't mix with people and argy politics and jam 'round like men; they stay to home and nurse the'r babies, and cook and look after the house, like a hen bird does after the nest. Did ye ever notice how cute wimmen is in sizin' people up?"

Lucien, remembering the very uncomplimentary way in which he had been "sized up" by Dolly, felt very awkward, but admitted that women were very apt to be good judges of human nature.

"Yes, they be," continued Jo, thoughtfully, "jist so long as they hain't interested too much. But when she wants anything very bad that her natural sense tells her she didn't oughter hav, then she git's

a reasonin', and her sense is busted. Take a woman ; 'fore she fails in love, her instinct is all right, and she knows whether the feller who comes courtin' her is a good man or not, but bimeby she gits alikin' him, and she begins to argy with herself, and finally settles in her mind that he's all right, and takes him, and just as soon as she quits wantin' him her sense gits the upper hand agin, and she knows what he is and hates the sight of him, and lives in misery or mebbe runs away with the hired man. No, a woman want made for argyng ; she is more nearer right when she acts quick and won't take it back."

As Jo's soliloquy closed Lucien ventured a glance at Dolly and caught her eye. "Do you think I followed instinct or logic in our discussion?" she inquired with a smile.

"I hope it was neither. I should be sorry indeed if it were either instinct or logic. I think you only followed the very feminine desire to tease."

Months and years afterward Lucien remembered the conversation, and Dolly, too, recalled it amidst memories which were as bitter as death. And within a year Jo said to Dolly, "Ye sized that feiler up right on the start, but ye argyed yerself outen it, the wuss luck ; but it can't be helped, girlie, and we must make the best of it."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE WATSON FAMILY AT HOME.

The fact that Dolly had argued and quarrelled with him rather encouraged Lucien than otherwise, and next day he started out with a firm determination to win the kindness for which he had pleaded in vain. It was a bright sunshiny day, and the school hours slipped away without friction, none of the pupils presuming to quote "the last teacher." After he dismissed the boys and girls Kitty Watson handed him a couple of little notes, one of which invited him to take tea with the Watsons that evening at six, and the other was addressed to Miss Dolly Felder. Kitty had not waited for an answer, and Lucien, as he strode homeward, hoped that the note he carried in his pocket was an invitation for Dolly. He was glad that it at least afforded him an excuse for hunting her up. He found her in the kitchen with her sleeves rolled up and a pan of apples on her lap.

"I have a note for you, Miss Felder. Excuse me if in my anxiety to deliver it promptly I have invaded the region from which I am usually excluded." Lucien said this in his blankest tone and tried to

look as if he were not anxious to know what the note contained.

"So you have been invited out to tea and I am asked to chaperone you," said Dolly, as she looked thoughtfully at the note ; "are you going?"

"Not unless you do. After your description of the family, I dare not undertake a tea party with them, alone."

"What shall I do, Mammy ? The Watsons want Mr. Strange and I to go up there for tea to-night."

"Please go, Miss Felder," exclaimed Lucien, "I hate to refuse, and I have still worse to go alone."

"Your father won't like it, Dolly. He don't like the Watsons, root ner branch and it makes him mad when any one of 'em comes on the farm, but as Mr. Strange is going I guess it'll be all right, an' people can't talk about you an' Tommy. I've had a ter'ble pain in my shoulder, but I kin git supper, seein's we needn't bake any pies, as the school-master hain't goin' to be here fer tea—"

"Never mind going into the details Mammy," interrupted Dolly, who didn't care to have the whole of their domestic economy explained. "I guess I'll go and protect Mr. Strange from 'Rene and her mamma.' Turning to Lucien she said, with a merry laugh, "I can't resist the temptation to see yon in the bosom of the Watson family. It'll be too much fun to miss. I'll go. At half-past five be ready to start. Prepare yourself for a siege, and promise to tell me your honest opinion of them."

"I'll do it if you'll promise not to repeat it."

"Repeat it," cried Dolly disdainfully. "I've faults enough without that of putting quotation marks around my opinions."

"Dolly's a ter'ble clip, hain't she?" said Mrs. Felder, with her half-cunning half-silly simper. "In my time girls didn't talk to young fellers that way. As I was tellin' Mrs. Boughner, when I was stayin' with her through her last trouble young folks hain't what they used to be in more ways than—"

"Never mind waiting to hear the rest Mr. Strange," said Dolly, quickly, "go and array yourself for conquest. I'll be ready as soon as you are. Mammy's views concerning how girls deport themselves 'in her time' will hardly entertain you, as your interests are in the future, not in the past."

Lucien was glad to escape, for Mrs. Felder's reminiscences were of such an obstetrical character that he felt uneasy lest he might be called upon for a professional opinion on some disputed point of practice.

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Half an hour later Dolly found Lucien  
sitting in her father's rocking chair on  
the verandah, impatiently swaying back-  
ward and forward, his eyes fixed on the  
door through which she was likely to  
come. "So soon," he cried, "I hardly  
expected you for an hour yet."

"Oh, you story-teller," laughed Dolly.  
"I know you looked at your watch a  
dozen times and muttered to yourself,  
'she'll keep me till midnight!'"

Lucien was charmed with the simple  
grace of Dolly's dress, the white muslin  
and dainty ribbons seemed to float about  
her like a cloud of spray and bair of  
glowing color, "Will I pass, Mr. Strange?  
Am I attired to suit your cultured  
fancy? If not I will go back  
and die of disappointment, for  
I have decked myself out in my best  
in the hope that I may not be the cause  
of any new pang to your pride," remarked  
Dolly, with her sweetly smiling sarcasm,  
as she noticed how his attention was  
riveted on her dress.

"I think you look lovely—lovelier than  
any woman I ever saw before," exclaimed  
Lucien, unheeding the sneer.

"Don't she now! Don't she look peart?  
I'll warrant she lays out them Watson  
wimmen—they're too old to be called  
guruls—see if she don't now! And her  
clothes is better'n their'n, too, and their  
paid fer, which is more'n their'u is!  
Haint they, Dolly?" Mrs. Felder stood  
in the doorway with her hands on her  
hips as she delivered herself of this opinion,  
and smirked meaningfully at Lucien.

"You shouldn't praise me so, Mammy,  
or Mr. Strange will think we are trying  
to out-shine and out-brag our neighbors."

"She's a cute un, haint she? Looshen?  
She's cleverer than any on 'em hereabouts,  
Dolly is," simpered the dame.

Lucien was disgusted, but he struggled  
with a smile, and said that he was not  
surprised a mother was proud of such a  
daughter.

If Dolly felt ashamed of her mother's  
silly speech, she concealed it, and Lucien  
wondered if she was not secretly pleased  
with her mother's compliments.

"Well, good-bye Mr. Strange. Well,  
good-bye Dolly; do yer slickest agin  
them Watsons. Don't let 'em make a  
point on ye!" called out Mrs. Felder, as  
Lucien and Dolly were leaving the gate.  
Lucien was surprised that she had  
called him by his "front" name, and felt  
like asking his companion whether it em-  
barrassed her to have her mamma make  
such remarks, but Dolly began chatting  
about something else, and he wisely re-  
frained. His lightness of heart was gone,  
and the conversation flagged. He was  
thinking about the mother, and wonder-

ing about the daughter. So, Dolly was  
"cute!"—and "slick." This carried to  
his mind the idea that she was deceitful  
and could play a part and cajole and  
humbug. Could it be! He looked at the  
sweet face beside him, and the wonder  
grew. She, too, was thinking, and her  
dark lashes almost touched her creamy  
cheeks. Her face was almost sad, and the  
hand that clasped her sun-shade trembled.  
"A penny for your thoughts, Miss Dolly,"  
he said.

"I was just thinking. Mr. Strange,  
that you were a suspicious and ungrateful  
man, and that you think you know a great  
deal about people and their motives,  
when, in fact, you know just enough to  
deceive yourself and make you act  
abominably," answered Dolly, and as she  
spoke a flush of red tinted her cheeks.  
"But we are at our destination, so put on  
your company manners."

As she spoke she opened a little gate,  
from which a long, grassy roadway led up to a pretentious frame house, built in the  
villa style, but lacking in both paint and  
finish. Their knock was answered by  
'Rene Watson, who gushed over Dolly  
and then took possession of Lucien as if  
she had a special right to his time and at-  
tention. As she conducted them to the  
parlor she looked unutterable things at  
Lucien, and reproached him for not visiting  
her sooner. She told him that she had been sounding his  
praises to the family until they could bear  
the suspense no longer, and determined  
to see the great paragon of learning and  
social brilliance for themselves. Her ma  
(pronounced "mah") was just dying to  
meet Doctor Strange, about whom she had  
heard so much, and her pa (pronounced  
"pah") was also anxious to see the illus-  
trious visitor. Lucien expected a good  
deal, but this effusion staggered him.  
Then Flora Watson came in and was in-  
troduced, and the winsome Flora at once  
related how 'Rene had been talking day  
and night of the fascinating gentleman  
who had, in some romantic way, come to  
Feldersburg to teach the village school.  
She assured him that her little sister  
Kitty did nothing but sound his praises  
and proclaim that such another teacher  
had never before existed. Then Mrs.  
Watson bulged through the door and was  
presented. She seized Lucien's hand and  
stood spell-bound gazing into his face.  
Turning to 'Rene, she exclaimed, "I  
would have known him anywhere after  
your description! The stern yet gentle  
face, and the lovely stand up collar!  
'Rene has done nothing but talk about  
you ever since the picnic, and I am afraid  
you are a very dangerous man to drop  
into a simple-minded place like Felders-

burg and captivate all the girls. I'm really afraid," she said, turning her fat smile on Dolly, "that our Tommy will have to look out, or he will lose his hold on Dolly here, but then," she added, condescendingly, "I suppose that has gone too far to be broken off." As she said this she seized Dolly and gave her a fat kiss.

"What has gone too far, Mrs. Watson?" queried Dolly.

"Oh, you are such a tease," gushed Mrs. Watson, "I'm afraid you'll lead Tommy a fearful life," and she patted Dolly's brown curls with her pulpy hand.

Dolly looked helplessly at Lucien just as he glanced at her with a jealous gleam in his dark eyes. In an instant he remembered her warning words, and almost burst out laughing.

Then Tommy came in, and his mother's attention was diverted for a moment. "Why, Tommy, why didn't you put on a stand up collar? Look at Doctor Strange how genteel he looks. You must get some collars like his, and a tie that you tie yourself; it must be the style, or Doctor Strange wouldn't have it on!" Then in a loud aside she enquired of Tommy if he didn't think Doctor Strange was the most "nobby" man he ever saw?

Tommy nodded, and René burst forth with some advice to the effect that they must not be so outspoken in their admiration of "Doctor" Strange, or it might make him vain. Then Flora whispered to Dolly and enquired if she wasn't quite scared to death having such a high-toned boarder.

Lucien was rendered speechless by these personal comments, and with unutterable thankfulness he heard Dolly answer:

"No, indeed, I am not! He has to take what we give him or else move on, and he and I quarrel all the time. I think he is the most quarrelsome man I ever saw!"

"Now, I was just thinking," burst forth Mrs. Watson, turning to Dolly, "that you and the Doctor could never get along together. He is too high strung to pull with such a flirt of a girl as you. You'd tease him till he'd go mad." Then sinking her voice to one of those piercing whispers which are as audible as a shriek: "What he wants in a girl is heart!"

Dolly whispered her answer in the same piercing undertone: "Yes, I'm sure he wants heart in a girl; he is quite stricken with Sadie Klimner; she is all heart—and tears."

"What! Sadie Klimner?" exclaimed Mrs. Watson, forgetting her whisper: "she'd never suit him. Now, a girl like René is the kind he will marry."

"Don't marry the doctor into the family

without asking his consent, mother," suggested Tommy, dryly.

"Why, Tommy! how you talk! You must excuse us, 'Doctor,' for discussing you so much, but your arrival and distinguished appearance have created quite a sensation." Mrs. Watson's fat, slobbering smile as she beamed on Strange almost made him sea-sick. Yet he confessed to himself, with a feeling of self-contempt, that even this undisguised flattery was more pleasing than disgusting.

"Tea's ready, ma!" cried Flora from the dining-room door.

"Doctor, take 'René out to tea,'" simpered the fleshy old dame. "Tommy, you take care of Dolly." After they were seated at the table a little man with a large head shot in the door and dropped into a chair at the head of the board, and before he had touched his seat he began pouring forth an address to his Maker framed very much after those speeches which are read to leading public men by town councils and national societies. It set forth the surpassing merits of the One addressed and the exceeding low degree and unworthiness of those who desired a blessing. From this it branched out in the direction of a complaint against hard times and the aggressive nature of the campaign carried on by the evil one, and referred to the fun the wicked enjoyed and the self-denial of Christians. Next the exceeding wickedness of the whole human family received a stern rebuke, and the laxity of the elect was viewed with alarm.

As the address was poured forth Lucien looked with undisguised curiosity at the head which was thrown back, the wide open eyes which seemed fixed on a spot in the ceiling, and the tightly clasped hands from which the stain of labor had not been removed. The family were taking it easy and leaning back in their chairs, while Dolly's dark blue eyes, wide open in wonder, were fixed on Mr. Watson's face. A last fervent appeal for every sin which suggested itself to the prayerful mind, and a hope that those partaking of the blessings before them might not forget death and the unknown horrors beyond, closed the ten-minutes address which Bro. Watson gave with un-failingunction three times per day.

Lucien woke with a start from the trance of astonishment into which he had fallen, and discovered that his mouth was open, and that he was betraying the wonder he felt.

Mrs. Watson introduced him to "Pah," and "Pah" nodded in return, though he stood up, and reaching across the table cordially shook hands with Dolly and tipped over a commode full of gravy. This excited the ire of Mrs. Watson, and

ent, mother," suggested, "you talk! You arrived and distinguished quite a son's fat, slobery son Strange almost yet he confessed to of self-contempt, raised flattery was pleasing.

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she at once publicly apologized for her husband's ignorance of the proprieties. Lucien was alarmed lest this might bring on the "harness tug" episode of which Dolly had told him, but to his great relief Watson pere took no notice of his spouse's railing. Then Mrs. Watson confessed to him that "Rene was the preparer of the good things before them, and that, unlike some girls who could play the piano, 'Rene was the best cook in the neighborhood, and could iron a 'fine shirt' with any one in the largest city. 'Rene heard her praises sounded by her mother without a blush or remonstrance, though she once turned the full force of her dusky, shimmering eyes on Lucien and said he must not think she had no accomplishments except those of the cook and laundress. 'Rene's eyes made Lucien feel uneasy; sometimes they were a blur of magnetic brown light before which his glance drooped, and he turned away. He had decided that "Rene Watson was a dangerous woman, and that her mind had a very great influence over his.

### CHAPTER XVII.

#### BROTHER WATSON REFERS TO THE FUTURE STATE.

While they were at the tea-table Lucien noticed that Dolly treated Tommy Watson very coldly, and that her fund of good-humor was not up to the average. He felt uncomfortable himself, seated between 'Rene and her mother, and found it almost impossible to talk. There is no test of a congenial company like a desire to talk, and a noisy dinner table, in forty-nine cases out of fifty, will pass as a happy even.

After the meal was over and Lucien was passing towards the parlor, his coat-sleeve received a violent jerk, and turning he found "Pah" Watson's big head alongside his shoulder. "Come and have a smoke and talk!" ejaculated the little man.

"Certainly a talk, but not a smoke," responded Lucien. "I have for sworn the fragrant weed."

Following "Pah" Watson, he wended his way through a long, narrow hall, and found himself in the kitchen, where Flora was already engaged in piling up the dishes from the tea-table. Sitting down by the door "Pah" Watson filled his pipe, and had just shoved his chair close up to Lucien, when 'Rene interrupted by requesting her father to take his guest into the dining-room, "as Doctor Strange was not accustomed to sitting in kitchens." "Pah" Watson replied with considerable asperity that she had better mind her own business, and that he had had too

many rows about smoking in the dining-room, to try it again. Lucien assured her that he would enjoy the kitchen, and 'Rene left them with a smile, of which Lucien thought while "Pah" Watson discussed more serious things.

"Say, young feller," and "Pah" Watson's voice took a confidential curve downward, "you're religious, if I'm not mistaken, by what I hear of you openin' school with prayer. Well, you bein' religious, as I was a-sayin'," he continued, hurriedly, as it afraid of further interruption, "I want to ask you suthin'. What are your views regardin' future punishment?"

"Well, Mr. Watson," began Lucien, in an embarrassed way. "I am afraid I have not given the subject sufficient thought to give a worthy opinion but I have been taught to believe in it as a lake of fire and brimstone, and when I try to think of it I really cannot grasp the idea at all."

"Ner me! Ner me!" exclaimed "Pah" shoving his chair closer to Lucien's. "I can't get onto it, no matter how I try. In fact, I'm danged if I believe in it, and yet I keep speakin' of it in my prayers and grace, so as to hav the blamed thing in my mind till I git the question settled. Did ye ever know anyone who really and truly didn't believe in hell?" At this point the big head was right in front of Lucien, and a pair of large brown eyes turned eagerly upon his own.

"Yes, a dozen of them," said Lucien. "Is any on 'em dead? Did they hang onto the idea when they were lettin' go of life?" he demanded, excitedly.

"I never heard," replied Lucien, "and I don't really know whether they are dead or alive."

"Then their opinion hain't wuth much," sighed Pah, as he lay back in his chair. "I knew two fellers who were solid on the hereafter havin' no hell in it, but the one on 'em who died spiled the hull bizness. As he was a-lavin' dyn' he said to the other one, 'William, it's mighty tough to lay here a-slippin' over the edge and never know whether here's a hell or not.' And his brother said, 'Well, Henery, it's too late to guess over agin, so you'll just have to grin and bear it.' The idee of a feller tryin' to grin when he's a-dyin'! And I hed confidence in that feller till then and thought he knew what he was talkin' about, but at the last minute he weakened and spilt it all." "Pah" Watson spoke regrettably as he added, "and, say, do you know, I was kinder glad when I heerd that William was a dyin', 'caus I felt certain he'd a stuck and worried through without gittin' skeered. But he spiled it all just at

the last minnit! Yes, spiled it all, the poor, weak critter!"

Lucien suggested that the views a man holds while he is well and strong and his mind is free from the fear of a Great Unknown into which he is about to enter, are more worthy of consideration than the fears and convictions which may come to him when he is on his death-bed."

"Yes, young feller, but if a man has views founded on his best reason and faith, they are too much a part of him to let go when he gets sick. But I thought William 'ud 'v stuck. He was so set on his idea, William was."

"But," continued he, "I can't give up the idea that there's some mistake 'bout hell. Now, if I hated you ever so much and I hed you in my power to do as I liked with ye, and I wanted to make ye suffer, I'd hold yer hand up agin that hot stove, would I? An' let it roast and burn while you hollered, an' yelled, an' screamed, an' me a-holdin' ye up agin' the fire! How long d'ye reckon I'd be able to stand it an' keep ye sufferin'? Not a second! Then, d'ye think our Father in heaven 'ud hold yer whole body up agin' that stove an' let ye stew an' try fur an hour, or a day, or a week, or a year, let alone a hull eternity? No, sir! I'd never respect Him if I thought He'd do that to one poor unfortunate critter, let alone millions on 'em. Why, young feller, a'posin' you burnt a young un's finger for disobeyin' ye in school, ud the trust es stand it? No, sir! They'd sack ye in a holy minnit, and put ye in jail in the bargain! But if ye kept the finger a-burnin' all day and the youngun a-yellin' an' screechin' fer mercy, why, they'd hang ye, man, afore ye could get home to supper. Yet they think God hain't got as much mercy as this school section, an' I'll hand out punishments that 'ud git a man lynched if he'd try 'em here on earth. I don't believe it! There's suthin' wrong about the idea—it's a slander on our Creator, so it is. But," he said, in a whisper, "I fust a heap about it. I hain't sure. I can't tell. Meobe it's right, an' I'll fall short and go there spite of everything I kin do."

"I do not think, Mr. Watson, that many people believe that it is literal fire, but a sort of mental and spiritual punishment," suggested Lucien, who wondered why so few people were really anxious like "Pah" Watson.

"Yes: but if it hain't fire it's suthin' just as bad, if the figurative view is to be taken, and that don't make it any better. Ye see, sufferin' is sufferin', an' it don't matter whether it's bilin' water, or

burnin' brimstone, or burnin' thoughts; it means the same sufferin', an' that, too, world without end," shuddered Watson, as he looked through the door up at the blue sky as if to pierce the veil of mystery and solve the problem which concerns every human soul.

At this point "Mah" bustled into the kitchen and said the girls wanted "Doctor" Strange in the parlor, if he was through with his smoke, and Lucien gladly fled from the further consideration of "Pah" Watson's pet topic.

"Rene was sitting at the cabinet organ, and "Mah" planted Lucien on a chair at the end of the instrument, where Rene could sing and gaze upon him, and thereby thrill him with melody and the magnetism of her beautiful eyes. She sang a love song to him, and had he not known that Dolly and everyone else in the room was aware that she was singing to him, her rich, thrilling voice, supported by the battery of her eyes, would have softened his stern yet sentimental nature and made him worship, for the time at least, at her shrine. As it was, he glanced furtively at Dolly and Tommy, and wondered if they were laughing at him. They were laughing, and his cheeks reddened. Of course they were joking about Rene's new conquest, and he felt an absolute repugnance to the fair charmer who had caused his misery. When she had ceased singing he told her in an unnecessarily loud voice that he had a constitutional objection to sentimental songs—in fact that they were too sweet for both his appetite and his digestion.

Rene's eyes flashed, and then as she modestly dropped her lashes she inquired what class of songs she preferred.

He said he didn't know, but he liked almost anything better than the class of songs which sounded like a troubadour tinking his guitar and howling forth his passion to his lady love in the middle of the street at noonday.

Rene's face flushed hotly as she replied: "I hope you did not make a personal application of my song: I'm sure it was not intended."

"Certainly not," bowed Lucien, coldly, "but I am expressing my views in a general way. An ordinary love song can be sung about one person, and I assure you it can only be sung to one person with any degree of success. In an opera, where every eye is fixed on the hero and heroine, she can sing the most absurdly stilted sentiment, and the audience will applaud or weep, as the case may be. But let you or I try and sing the same thing in a drawing-room, and it is not only a failure, but—unless the singer's voice makes

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the listener forget the hour and the place it produces a laugh."

'Rene would have stopped, but 'Rene's angry face made it impossible. "If you have noticed popular songs, you will acknowledge this to be true," he added, in a more conciliatory tone. "The love songs which touch the popular heart are those in which the beautiful heroine, if not the brave hero, are cold in death. About these it is possible to sing in stilted phrase, because the world wills that we must always speak well of the dead."

'Rene was disposed to , and and hat love songs about 1. agrees and heroines were the most effective. "Robin Adair," "Kathleen Mavourneen," "Once again," and indeed all the songs she new to be most successful in moving an audience to applaud were about living people.

Lucien was not musician enough to follow through the list, but in his dilemma hazarded an opinion which is correct. I am not speaking about people altogether. Of course the dramatic personae may be represented in the popular song alive or dead, but if the subject of the song is alive, the song represents the passion itself to be dead on either one side or the other. Without death there would be no romance. Living is the most unromantic thing one can do. Listen to the story! He talks of death, and his hearers are thrilled; the rev'nt preaches departure, and his hearers weep; tales of widowed wives and bereaved husbands are the stock in trade of those who desire to soften the human heart. The neglected ambitions and aspirations are those which song or speech move us most, because they are the exaggerated, heroic form of the ordinary impulse of man, and strike a fancy as being noble as well as natural. I believe," said Lucien, as he leaned back in his chair, "that sentiment and thought ought to be told in private."

"Why do you couple sentiment and thought?" inquired 'Rene.

"Because," answered Lucien, "a lie is only a sentiment, and sentiment is only a lie."

At this point Dolly chimed in, remarking, "Your sentiments must be very durable, Mr. Strange, if they are so easily allied to untruth."

"Not necessarily," retorted Lucien, sharply. "Those sentiments which command us do not lead to words, but to actions."

"I think the doctor is right!" echoed "Watson, folding her fat hands, and gazing with studied and speechless admiration at Lucien. "Of course, certainly, he is right; we can't be expected to know much as he does."

"About what?—sentiment or lies?" inquired Dolly.

"Oh, you awful girl; isn't she such a tease? Play 'Floating Down,' 'Rene. It is so lovely!" "Down the Stream of Time," you know," wheezed 'Man.'

"No," cried Tommy; "give us something jolly. Dolly, you play and we'll all join in."

Dolly protested, but 'Rene left the stool, and Tommy, putting his arm around Dolly's waist, waited her up to the organ and seated her. This familiarity shocked Lucien, and confirmed his worst suspicions regarding the relation between the two. His black eyes gleamed and he hated them both, Dolly particularly, as she made no violent resistance, and did not even rebuke the incorrigible Tommy.

Turning sharply away he saw 'Rene watching him, and he smiled and rushed into conversation. She suggested a stroll outside, and he acquiesced. The moonlight softening 'Rene's features, and as Lucien looked into the face so close to his shoulder, he confessed that she was beautiful. The bars of light shining through the trees illuminated her face with its passionate charm, and the shadows hid the reckless and inconstant impulses which made the companion of the hour the tenant of her heart. She felt in the mood to woo and be wooed, and Lucien's anger made him an easy conquest. Leaning over the gate in the shadow of the maples which arched above them, their talk drifted lowward with astonishing speed. Lucien felt privileged to adopt Tommy's easy style, and his arm stole around 'Rene's shapely waist, apparently unnoticed—at least unrebuked. His conquest was too easy, and he was silently arguing out a good plan of getting back his arm, when 'Rene's head commenced to nestle on his shoulder, and Lucien looked hurriedly around to see if anyone was coming. Leaning lovingly upon him, 'Rene began to sing in an absent, reminiscent way, her voice low and sweet, yet clear as a bird's. The song told him how lonely she was, and that love came to all but her. He felt foolish but sympathetic, and his arm tightened up sufficiently to give her a very perceptible squeeze. Dolly's voice coupled with Tommy's pealed a merry chorus from the parlor, and Lucien's disengaged hand somehow came in contact with 'Rene's, and another "sweet and low" was warbled in his ear, and he was debating within himself whether she expected him to kiss her. No, it wouldn't do. Looking furtively around he saw they were still alone, and he kissed her. She commenced to weep, and he inquired the reason and tried to comfort her. She

answered nothing but cried softly, and a tear fell on his hand. He wanted to take his handkerchief out of his pocket and wipe away the tear—not from her eyes, but from his hand. It was "tickling" him, but he couldn't do it without letting go of her hand; her hand was clinging, and he had to maintain the grip. It was very awkward. He resolved to kiss her again, and maybe she would get angry and push him away. He tried it, and she replied by throwing her arms around his neck and giving him what her brother Tommy would call "a kiss from away back." The embrace lingered, and, without seeming to be too violent, Lucien jerked back his head and glanced toward the house. Dolly and Tommy were looking out of the bay window. Lucien seized 'Rene's hand and quickly un wound her arm from about his neck. He wasn't rude but he was altogether too rapid in concluding the embrace to be lover-like.

"I am afraid we are observed," he said in apology.

"No one can see us while we are in the shadow," she answered, reassuringly. "I've often noticed that the gate is in perfect darkness to any one in the window."

It struck Lucien that 'Rene had been experimenting on the shadow-and-gate question, and he feared that his experience was similar to that of many others who had stood in the moonlight with the charming 'Rene.

"Let's go out for a walk!" he heard Tommy say to Dolly.

"No, thanks; I prefer lamplight to moonlight," and she turned away from the window and rattled off a march on the organ.

Lucien suggested a return to the house, and, without waiting for a reply, took her arm and strode forward, and 'Rene could not resist. When they entered the cheap but tasty little parlor Dolly was playing, Tommy lying on the sofa, and "Mah" was asleep with her feet on the rung of a chair and a section of very large stocking, ankle and prunella shoe in sight. 'Rene at once awakened her, and "Mah" started violently and jumped to her feet.

"Why, 'Rene, you've bin crying," exclaimed "Mah," without considering her surroundings.

"Hush-h," whispered 'Rene; but it was too late to prevent Dolly's quick eyes from noticing the tear stains.

"Pan" Watson fortunately turned up at this point and requested Dolly and the rest to sing. "There is a fountain filled with blood." As they sang it "Pah" joined in with immense fervor but no tune.

"That goes agin the hell theory, seems to me, don't it?" he said, turning to Lucien.

"Yes, I think it does," Lucien answered, with an appalling fear that the old question was to be reopened.

"If you are ready I think we had better go home," said Dolly, as she stood with her hands behind her, listening to "Pah's" question and Lucien's answer.

"Certainly," cried Lucien, thankfully. "I am ready."

"What! So airly!" cried "Mah," rushing forward. "Why, it isn't only nine o'clock."

"Yes, but Pappie likes to see me before he goes to bed, and he'll scold if I'm not home."

"Why, how silly; and we were just thinking how lovely it would be to have Doctor Strange's company for the evening," mourned "Mah." "If you are in such a hurry, Tommy can see you home and 'Doctor' Strange can go when he likes."

"I'm not afraid to go home alone, and if Mr. Strange wants to stay I would not be so ruthless as to tear him away."

"I must go, Mrs. Watson, as I have some work to do yet to-night, though I am sure I hate to leave such pleasant society," he said, looking at 'Rene, who was evidently "in the dumps."

Dolly had gone to get her hat, and "Mah" seized the opportunity of whispering to him to come up some night alone and make an evening of it. "Soon," she wheezed, "or 'Rene will be broken hearted."

When he said good night 'Rene's hand clung to his, and she gave him a look which said unutterable things. He answered it with a cold "good night" and followed Dolly, who was strolling towards the gate in company with the inevitable Tommy. When Tommy closed the gate after them and bade Dolly a very sentimental adieu, Lucien thanked heaven the evening at Watson's was over, and began to wonder if Dolly had seen his episode with 'Rene.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### DOLLY'S TEMPER.

"I'm glad to be out of there and in the clear, fresh honest air once more!" exclaimed Dolly, with a sigh of relief.

"Why?" asked Lucien, who was still debating the probability of Dolly having seen his absurd flirtation with 'Rene.

"Why!" echoed Dolly. "Because there isn't a breath of honest air under the Watson roof. Everything is artificial, deceitful, and false."

"You seemed to enjoy that sort of

hell theory, seems aid, turning to Lu-

s," Lucien answered, fear that the old opened,

think we had better Dolly, as she stood and her listening to Lucien's answer.

" cried "Mah," Why, it isn't only

kes to see me before I'll scold if I'm not

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## XVIII.

### EMPER.

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olly. "Because honest air under- eveything is arti-

joy that sort of

atmosphere while you were in it, Miss Dolly!"

"Did I? Well, I certainly endeavored to keep myself employed, and singing is the only way to prevent 'Mah' Watson from slobbering over me and advising me concerning Tommy's superior merits as a stylish young man and a 'good provider.' I would rather sit on the stool and play and sing than be cornered by one of the girls and forced to listen to mushy talk of how near crazy Tommy is to marry me. I would much prefer three hours of the society of the Watson family collectively than ten minutes alone with any one of them leaning over the front gate."

Dolly's taunting laugh, together with the fear that she was possessed of the facts, made Lucien's face redder, though darkness veiled the guilty blush.

"Did you kiss her or only squeeze her hand? From the window it seemed almost as if you were doing both, you were so suspiciously silent. And then of course Fellersburg understands 'Rene's willingness to flirt desperately, and I suppose no young man of the world ever misses a chance to talk and act love to a pretty girl who is anxious to listen. What a lovely picture you two would have made if the man-in-the-moon had taken your portrait in that sweet trance into which you fell." Dolly laughed merrily, and she felt sure from Lucien's evident embarrassment she had guessed rightly.

"And of course 'Rene will tell 'Mah,' and Tommy, and Kitty—for the Watsons have no tender secrets in which they do not all share—and of course Kitty will tell all the girls at school, and you will hear of it in every breeze, and see it written on the blackboard, and on the fences, and in the copy books! Won't it be lovely! 'Rene and Strange,' and 'Strange 'Rene,' and 'Doc. Strange and 'Rene Watson.' Oh, my! won't the scholars have fun with you?" she whispered sympathetically.

Lucien bit his lip with vexation. "I don't know why it should amuse you so much if I have made a fool of myself! I presume you have seen people do it before, even if you have no personal experience."

"Oh, yes, often, but I never before saw such a wise and steady young man as 'Doctor' Strange stoop to folly. Perhaps it may teach you to be more charitable to others when you hear of the Watsons having made conquests! How considerate of them it was to overlook your school-teaching business and call you 'Doctor!' Anticipating your noble future you know—when 'Rene will be Mrs. Doctor. 'Mah' confided to me,

while you were at the gate, that the wedding would take place immediately after you 'got through'—your profession, I suppose—or your senses."

"The old fool!" hissed Lucien, thoroughly enraged, "she knows I have seen 'Rene but once before to-night! How could she hope to impose on you with such an absurd falsehood."

"That makes no difference. She never pauses to inquire if any one will believe her; yet her silliest lies become gospel before they have made the round of Fellersburg. You yourself were influenced against me by one of her silly tales before you ever saw me, and have not got over it yet!" Dolly spoke sharply and with a good deal of feeling.

"And if you ever gave 'Mah' Watson as much reason for her fool-talk as I did to-night," cried Lucien passionately, "I have but little pity for you!"

Dolly stopped, and turning quickly in the little roadside path, faced Lucien, and through the dim light he could see her fiercely scornful look as she exclaimed:

"You need not confess your follies to me; neither your virtues nor vices interest me, but if you insinuate that I ever squeezed, or spooned over the gate or any other place with a Watson or anybody else, you lie!" She was in a passion, and as she stood there, her white ungloved hand grasping her sun-snake as if to strike her adversary, she was a picture of virtuous beauty defending herself.

Lucien was appalled at the volcanic effect of his words, and stammered out an apology. "I meant to convey no such insinuation, Miss Feller. I was but accusing myself, not you."

"Yes you were accusing me," vociferated the angry girl. "I do not want to be coupled, even in your morbid, nasty mind, with memories of the miserable people you must have associated with. Your degraded opinion of mankind and womankind may fit yourself, but I do not propose to have it applied to me. I hate you and your prigish ways, and I despise your low estimate of everything good and true."

Dolly's rage had spent itself, and nothing but her pride kept back the tears. In spite of pride the last words ended in a sob which she tried to conceal by a hysterical little laugh. The brilliant August moon shone down on her fair face and brightened into a halo of glory those shining curls. In her dark eyes gleamed the tears she was too proud to shed, and thinking this was the rainbow after the storm Lucien barred the way as she turned to go.

"I am sorry you hate me, for I do not hate you. I have feared that you disliked me, now I know it. I knew more—

I love you passionately, jealously. From the moment that your father introduced me to you and your hand touched mine, I have loved you, and it has been this jealous passion which has made me seem so base and suspicious. Pray forgive me," cried Lucien, with eager, trembling voice. "Indeed, my folly to-night was caused by my flight from the sight of your apparent kindness to another."

"You do well to remind me of your performance to-night," gasped Dolly, who had been dumbfounded by this passionate appeal. "I am sure you must be tired out making love to two women in one evening. Your heated head needs some sleep. Go home before you make me sick."

"Stay," he cried, catching her hand, "I will speak."

"Speak if you will, but keep your hands off," and as she spoke she struck his hand from her wrist. "Speak to the trees and make love to the wind if you must, but if you attempt to touch me I'll tell Pappie to kill you. Again Dolly was in another tempest, but this time Lucien did not seek to excuse himself. Walking quietly by her side, he spoke earnestly at first; then his deep, heavy voice trembled with the intensity of his passionate determination.

"I have done you no wrong by loving you, Dolly Fleder, though I cannot blame you for despising me for to-night's folly. You have no right to treat a love you know is sincere as you do mine. You hate me, you say; but Dolly, sometimes a little hate changes into a great love. I swear to you, by the great God that made you man, and the heavens above us, that I will keep on loving you, no matter how often you say 'Nay.' And I tell you, Dolly Fleder, unless your heart be shallow my love will win yours. I spoke no word of love to-night, nor ever before in my poor life, to any woman on earth, excepting to my mother and you. I have never desecrated the word by applying it to base passion, and I vow that I will not. I love you, Dolly! I love you! I love you!"

Dolly was silent. The path turned from the roadside to cross the bridge, and with a light spring she cleared the little gully and reached the bridge in advance of her companion. Leaning for a moment over the heavy timbers, she looked down at the moonlit stream murmuring gently below.

"Dolly," cried Lucien, as he stood beside her, "shall my love call to you through all the years that this river will run, and never hear an answer?"

Dolly, leaning over the guard of the

bridge, rested her elbow on the timber, while her arm supported her curly head. The sleeve slipping down revealed the perfect curves of her shapely arm. Her face was in shadow, but encouraged by her silence Lucien whispered: "Will there never be an answer?—never an echo? Can a love like mine beat against your heart and forever fail to stir its pulse in response? Oh, Dolly! Dolly! Do not be so cruel. Believe that I love you, and tell me that some day you may learn to return my love."

"Maybe—some day," whispered Dolly.

"Thank God!" cried Lucien, joyfully. "I will toil as Jacob did for Rachel and the years will seem short if you but sometimes smile and tell me to hope on." Bending down, he tried to kiss her hand, but, snatching it away from him, she laughed scornfully, and said, in her most irritating and mocking voice:

"You play the lover very nicely, Mr. Strange; your vocation should be the stage, and your part Romeo. As a professional lover I think you would be a great and thrilling success, but for to-night—drop the curtain."

"Are you so shallow-hearted that you cannot comprehend that your railing in agony to me?" demanded Lucien, haughtily.

"Do not quarrel with me again, please," answered Dolly. "Pappie is waiting for us, we must go into the house."

After she had kissed her father, she said "Good-night," and for a moment her dark enquiring eyes, soft and dewy with tears which threatened to come, looked into Lucien's as he wished her happy dreams—and he was consoled—at least she did not really hate him.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### "AT LAST WE GROW ACCUSTOMED."

The slumberous autumn days did not pass quickly. Lucien was neither happy nor had he begun to feel at home. Yet those hours were numbered amongst the blest moments when the star of Hope shone brightly, and the sorrows and disappointments of to-day were borne gladly because to-morrow promised joy and contentment. The school was less irksome, and his tendency to study human nature and dissect character found ample scope. The scholars alternately loved, feared, and hated him, but there was never an hour when a word of praise or mark of preference from him would not purchase the loyalty and devotion of any childish heart in the school. As they grew to know him better they liked him. He was just. Then the boys admired him because they had never known such an atheist and scholar. The

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## R XIX.

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girls grew to love him, and while they giggled and sneered, they would give their little world to be "the master's" recognized favorite.

Even Peter Klimmer had been subdued into a hateful quiet.

As the leaves on the maples grew golden, and the splendor of the hillside forests made a sunset glory which shone through all the autumn air and mellowed not only the landscape but the passions of men, a new feeling stole over the heart of the schoolmaster, who for the first time dwelt in Nature's soft Indian summer splendor. To an organization like Lucien's, Indian summer has charms to which a colder or more common placidity must always be a stranger. The crimson and gold, the carpets of fallen leaves, the hazy splendor, suit spirits which are at once sensitive and self-assertive. The royal magnificence of the woods, the drapery of the hills, the tints of the skies give regal surroundings to the commonest hind, but to the proud soul which sighs in vain for supremacy and gnaws itself because the crown and sceptre are for others, the tinted beauty of the season is an untold joy. The artistic tenderness which is in the roughest soul, grows strong, the music of nature's people—the kine, the sheep, the squirrels, the chipmunks, the woodpeckers and the quail—sounds in the soul as well as in the ear. God's littlest folk are talking to us. "Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge." The little streams, almost dried up by scorching summer suns, again ripple over the pebbles and boulders with the joy of the softest season, when rains come without sleet and the sun shines without burning.

The wild geese are not yet flying southward and the ducks are still diving among the wild rice of the marshes. The birds of summer have not gone, the storms of winter have not come. The hurrying toils of the harvest are followed by the slower and less fretful labor in the fall wheat fields and the fallows; the days are filled with the smell of the plowed ground and the nights are no longer made up of the undreaming slumber of aching fatigue, it is the playtime of the gods, "the day of the field of the cloth of gold" for nature's kings; it is the time when the hardened hand of labor clasps the soft fingers of girlhood as brawn and velvet inter-twined; when the hand that holds the carded wool and follows back the spinning yarn, meets the hand which holds the plow and the pulse of love throbs fast and pure as never yet it beat in ballroom or in fashion's haunts. In the country the great god of love reigns through those sweet autumn days and pure pas-

sions bud and blossom "amidst the kisses of the soft south-west."

The shrill whistling, the cry of the 'coon in the cornfield, the hoot of the owl and the nighthawk, the husking bee, the dance in the barn, the stroll homeward, the question clumsily spoken, the answer honestly given, the vows which would have shamed Romeo, the kisses which would frighten Juliet, the lives of love and faith, the deaths surrounded by hope, and the pure soul from which life and vanities fall, as the tassel and husk fall from the corn; these are the glimpses the One Great God sees of Nature's loves in Nature's home.

So through these golden days ran the love story which was now a part of Lucien's life. He loved Dolly and his passion soothed his nature. He laughed when she teased, and smiled when she was perverse. He became queerly patient and forgiving, and Dolly, in the most uncertain and unreliable way, was so sweet and her voice so caressing that Lucien thought of nothing but the moments when he could hope to be alone with her.

One night they were alone on the verandah, and the yellow moonbeams straying through the vine which draped the lattice, scarce revealed Dolly's sweet face and Lucien's stern features.

"Dolly," whispered Lucien, "why is it that lovers swear by the moon?"

"Because it changes," interrupted Dolly, rocking breezily to and fro.

"No," continued Lucien; "it is because that moon-face will look down upon us throughout life, and when we sit, as you and I do to-night, dreaming of happiness, we vow that that moon shall never discover us happy with another. And, Dolly, darling, it is my life's dream that the moon shall shine upon us together and find us loving and true. I love you, Dolly! Can you longer withstand the suit of one who for the first time asks a woman to share his fate, to be his wife, when you know he loves you and is willing to devote his life to your happiness?"

Lucien's hand clasped Dolly's and her trembling fingers sought no release. "Dolly, darling, let us be friends, lovers, and have no more of the bickerings of strangers, and the hateful uncertainties of those who at once love and fear. Those whose lives are pure and loving find a fate which is as sweet as their life. Trust in me and I will try to be your happy fate. Dolly, sweetheart, kiss me 'yes'!"

As he leaned towards her she started back, shielding her face with her hands. "I'm afraid, oh, so afraid!"

Springing to his feet he threw his arm around her waist, and lifting her from the chair held her to his heart, as in deep,

tremulous tones he poured forth his vow of love: "I swear by the heaven above and the earth beneath to be faithful and true, and when I doubt you or forsake you, may you moon look down on my misery and never light a happy hour in my life. I have never known love since my mother died; love me, Dolly darling, and I swear by the grave of that mother to be true and faithful, I will."

"I'm afraid. Oh, I'm so frightened of you!" sobbed the trembling Dolly, as her scared eyes gazed up at the dark, excited face so close to her own. Suddenly she threw her arms around his neck and gave him a passionate kiss. "Good-night!" she cried, and with her hands on his shoulders she pushed him violently from her and fled.

The startled Lucien stood for a moment dumbfounded by Dolly's vehemence. "Bless me!" he muttered, "how violent she is. But she is mine! she is mine! She loves me! At last she is mine! mine!"

He followed Dolly into the house, but she was not in sight. Putting on his hat, he strolled down by the river and up its bank. In his excited walk his fancy dwelt on the joys of the coming days when Dolly would no longer be cruel and kind by turns. She would kiss him and be an angel of tenderness to him, as she was to her father.

Pausing suddenly, he asked himself why she was so frightened of him. That would pass away; it best proved her girlish modesty. Of course she didn't fear he would hurt her. He stood still and laughed as he conjured up the picture of himself, Lucien Melroy Strange, beating Dolly and kicking over the furniture in the style of fierce husbands. Returning late, entranced by visions of happiness, he saw a light still burning in Dolly's room, and wondered if she, too, was thinking of the sweet days to come. To his surprise, Jo Felder, who had returned late from town, was also astir.

"Girls are ter'ble notional critters," Jo complained, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe. "Thar's Dolly now, took a sudden freak fer goin' visitin', and nuthin' 'll do but I must take her to the railway station to-morrer. Goin' to see one of her boardin' school friends. So I guess I'd better git to bed and hev a sleep ready fur an early start."

This was anything but pleasant news to Lucien. "Runnin' away from me when she knows that to see her and be with her is all the joy I have!" He shut the door of his room, and stood moodily holding the lamp and looking around at what would be nothing but a prison while

Dolly was away. A letter lay on the dresser, and as he picked it up his heart beat tumultuously. It was a message from Dolly. The writing was delicate and beautiful. The letter opened abruptly, not even "Dear Friend," to introduce the words of farewell.

I am going away early in the morning, to be gone for a couple of weeks, if not longer. I am going because I want to be away from your influence. I do not love you. Love and fear do not go together. I am afraid of you. When I come back I hope you will have found an excuse to have changed your boarding place. I cannot account for my folly of to-night, but I can atone for it by saying GOOD-BYE.

P.S.—Do not try to see me in the morning, or I shall have to tell Pappie why I am going.

Lucien stared at the letter in his hand and a sense of dull, aching misery stole over him. Again and again he re-read it, and still less could he understand her reason. "I do not love you," he repeated, bitterly. "Love and fear do not go together. I am afraid of you." "She asks me to change my boarding place while she is gone, and thus confess my humiliation and rejection," he hissed between his set teeth. "Never! never!" he cried, in a furious whisper; "I'll stay until I'm sent away, and then I'll leave the whole accursed place!" But the stormy temper did not last. The great wave of his passion for Dolly swallowed up his resentment, and the thought of losing her pierced his soul with a pain which made him forget all else. Again he read her letter, seeking for comfort. "I can atone for it by saying 'Good-bye.'" "Atone for what?" he asked himself. "For having listened to me and kissed me," he answered. "Atone! Atone! What a word to use! Atone to whom? Not to me. Then to whom? Has she made vows to another lover?" Lucien's eyes gleamed and his face was livid with jealous hate. "Ah, my dear friend Tommy Watson," he muttered, with a baleful smile; "perhaps she sinned against that fond youth by me during my caress." As he thought of this he paced excitedly up and down the room, and stopping before his little table, smote it fiercely with his fist. The noise recalled his surroundings and quieted his mood.

Again he read the letter, and sought to fathom the writer's motive. "Atone! Atone!" Why should going away be a stroke of atonement? Atonement means reparation, sacrifice, or suffering. Why should a visit to a friend mean any of these things unless—unless—Lucien stopped suddenly—unless it meant that to be away from home—from him, meant a sacrifice of pleasure. Still again he read Dolly's letter.

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stancy! She will yield yet! If she  
wasn't afraid of herself, she wouldn't run  
away." And while the fire of hope was  
leaping through his veins he decided to  
write her a letter. As he drew paper and  
ink from the drawer, he thought, "How  
will I give her the letter?" Throw it into  
her room? She might miss it, and her  
mother get hold of it. No, he would  
watch till she left her room in the morn-  
ing, and hand it to her then. If he said  
nothing, she could not feel called upon to  
confide the matter to her father. He  
would tell her all: of his past life and  
future hopes, of his love for her and the  
awful misery of parting. Hour after hour  
he wrote, pausing often to listen and look  
at his watch lest she might escape from  
her room without his knowledge. Tears  
fell on the paper as he wrote. Memories  
of the past, faces he had forbidden to re-  
turn, came back to him. The dark Italian  
face of his mother looked up at him  
from every page, and her dusky, mel-  
ancholy eyes beamed on him with love and  
pride as of yore. In the midst of these  
memories he wrote on, forgetting himself  
and growing eloquent in his appeal to  
Dolly for merciful judgment.

Long before dawn he heard Jo call his  
wife and Dolly, and before the sound of  
his heavy steps on the stairs had died  
away Mrs. Felder was astir. Before  
going down to the kitchen she opened  
Dolly's door and told her to take plenty  
of dresses, and see that her pa gave her  
money enough to show her friends that  
even if she did come from the country  
she could hold her own. Dolly was up  
and had lit her lamp. "Why, bless ye,  
Dolly, yer lookin' like a ghost! What's  
the matter of ye?"

"Nothing, mammy; only I couldn't  
keep thinking of going away. I'm all  
right." "I hope ye ain't goin' to be sick, an' me  
not to 'tend on ye. But I guess ye'll  
be all right when ye git thar and git  
settled."

With his door half opened Lucien wait-  
ed, after Mrs. Felder went downstairs,  
for a glimpse of Dolly. He heard her  
lose her trunk, and thought a sob once  
roke the stillness that followed.

"Breakfast's ready, Dolly," Mrs. Fel-  
der called up the stairway, and Lucien  
was ready by his door.

Dolly came out of her room wearing a  
dark traveling dress and looking in the  
light more shapely and beautiful than  
ever. Without a word Lucien held out  
the letter he had written. Clasping her

hands behind her she shook her head in  
determined refusal, but he was not to be  
refused. Seizing her arm he forced the  
letter into her hand, his haggard face and  
burning eyes appealing to her mercy with  
a power unknown to words. As he grasped  
her fingers and closed them over the letter  
he pressed them in silence, his eyes dev-  
ouring her face and his lips twitching  
nervously. Dolly was frightened at the  
change a night had made in his appear-  
ance. Great tears stood in his eyes, and  
as he bent to kiss her hand a scalding drop  
fell upon her wrist.

"Air you comin', Dolly?" called her  
father, who was within hearing but not  
in sight.

"Yes, Pappie." Her eyes said farewell  
to Lucien as he stood watching her while  
she tripped lightly down the stair, and  
then, turning into his room he threw himself  
on the bed in a passion of love and re-  
gret.

## CHAPTER XX.

### LUCIEN'S LOVE-LETTER.

Dolly looked almost happy as she  
climbed into the buggy beside her father.  
That Lucien had not accepted his dis-  
missal pleased her, and with his letter in  
her pocket she nestled close to her father,  
and, with his arm around her, went to  
sleep, and did not wake till the morning  
sun streamed in her face. Then she woke  
with a start and cried, "I've lost it! Oh,  
I've lost it!"

"Lost what, Dolly?" asked her father,  
stopping his team.

"I guess I've been dreaming, Pappie.  
I thought I'd lost everything in my  
pocket." And her blush and laugh only  
made Jo pat her cheek and wish that she  
could always sleep as soundly as she had  
been doing for the past two hours.

When Jo left her at the train his honest  
eyes were full of tears and he could scarce  
say good-bye. Dolly clung to him and  
cried, and he begged her not to stay long  
away.

"Maybe not over a week, Pappie; I'll  
write to you. Good-bye."

Dolly watched her old father standing  
lonely on the platform as the train moved  
away, and murmuring a blessing on his  
dear old head, quickly settled herself in  
the seat and took Lucien's letter from her  
pocket and began to read:

There can be no beginning to this letter  
except the last words I spoke to you. "I  
love you." I have no right to call you "my  
darling" or even "my friend." I had hoped  
some day to call you "my wife," and last  
night when you kissed me I thanked God  
that you loved me. Your letter tells me  
that I am wrong, that you do not love me.  
You are wrong, you do love me. Such love

as I feel for you does not go out without the attraction of an answering love. If you do not care for me you are not worthy an honest man's love. No, I will not cross out the last sentence. It is true. You will call me coxcomb and egotist, but you are away from me, and in my misery I will be glad to be remembered even by what you believe to be my follies. Why did you kiss me if you did not love me? Are you a coquette? Are balcony scenes and declarations of love so frequent that you have learned to simulate a passion you do not feel?

"The jealous monster," exclaimed Dolly, crushing the corner of the letter in her hand. "He deserves to be miserable."

You do love me. I cannot think you are the coquette you would have me believe. Yet I have no proof of love except that I love you. Darling Dolly, I love you. You fill my waking fancies and my dreams with thoughts and hopes which were strangers to me till I saw you. You have been unkind, and I have not hated you as I do others who wound me. You have taunted me, and alone in my room I have looked out over the orchard and river and confessed that I was wrong, and have sat and hated myself till dawn. I cannot accept your refusal. It means death to me. I can never forget you. My stiff, unyielding nature which you dislike is at least constant. I can no more cease to love and think of you than the Christian can forget his God and worship a graven idol. I must keep on loving you. My pride tells me to-night to forget you, to hate you, but it is impossible. You have wounded me, but I cannot resent it. I feel weak and almost hopeless. I put down my pen and think. I try to be angry and resent your cruelty. It is impossible. I see nothing but your sweet face, and the fear that I may never see it looking kindly, lovingly into mine makes me tremble like a coward. I dare not erase a word I have written lest you may suspect me of having studied what I write. I am and always have been honest with you. Your father suspected me of being a hypocrite, but, Dolly darling, believe me—for God's sake believe me—I am incapable of playing a part. Bad as I am, I am no worse than I seem. You say you fear me! Why? Do you think I would be cruel to you if you loved me? that I would strike you or abuse you? Oh, Dolly, how you misjudge me if you do! No woman could ever have a more devoted slave than I would be to you if you loved me, even as you love your father. "Afraid" of me! I have thought for an hour seeking to find the origin of your fear and I have failed to fathom it. Have you not seen my great love for you? How it is my whole life, day by day, to see you and hear your voice! If you were my wife your love would be my world and my profession would be but the means of making you happy and proud of me. I would—great heaven, it cannot be that you are afraid that I seek you because your father is reputed rich and I want your money! You cannot think so meanly of me. You have reproached me with my pride. It is impossible that you think for an in-

stant that I would consent to be a hanger-on—a thing living on his wife! I do not believe it. Even my timorous soul is too strong to harbor such a fear. That is not the reason. What is it? Do you think I will be a failure and you will be ashamed of me? I may not know how to teach school but I know I will be a success as a physician. But you are not selfish enough to think of these things. I am almost almost a stranger. Do you fear me because you do not know my life? Have you heard anything against me? It is impossible that my enemies have followed me and found me out! However unlikely it may be, I will tell you all and you may judge between me and my accusers. Perhaps my past sufferings may excuse me for the faults which you have pointed out and make you see that if I am suspicious and watchful I have learned the lesson in a bitter school.

The more I write the more my heart sinks. What I tell you may increase your fear. It is too late to stop now. I have longed to tell you, to ask you to believe in me. I would give ten of the best years of my life to hear you say that I have been wronged and that no court except the one in heaven could make you believe me guilty. The hope is nearly dead. My life is to be blasted unto the bitter end and the sweet confiding love in which I hoped to shelter myself is denied me. If I had no right to hope that you would love me, I had still less right to ask you to share my name. I do it now. This night of self-questioning and fruitless searching after a hope is fast growing into despair. If I had been conscious of guilt I never would have dared to love you or speak to you. I am innocent and have loved you, but you have refused my love and I can do nothing now but tell you of my past, that you may not suspect me of having tried to deceive you.

My mother was an Italian and married a wealthy doctor who was spending a winter in Naples. His illness, which had disappeared in Italy, returned after the resumption of his practice, and soon after my sister was born, he died. Our home was in —, New York state, and three years ago my mother died. My sister, who was always jealous of my mother's love for me, had married a clever, but unscrupulous young lawyer, and his influence over her completed the estrangement which had been growing since childhood. All my father's property was left to my mother, and she made a will leaving the bulk of it to me, though providing a competence for my sister. Two old servants were the witnesses. The text of the will was in the ornate and exceedingly peculiar handwriting of my brother-in-law, who was a junior partner of my mother's lawyer. Shortly after the will was executed, mother, who had become suspicious of my brother-in-law, sent for her lawyer and had him draw up a new will, settling certain property absolutely on my sister, so that her husband could not obtain the proceeds of it even with her consent. She requested him not to inform his partner and to do the work himself. He wrote out a rough draft and left it with her to look over, promising to re-

to be a hanger-wife! I do not know if my soul is too full of fear. That is not true. Do you think I will be ashamed to teach school or to be a physical enough to you? I am almost afraid you fear me before life? Have you seen me? It is impossible to have followed me wherever unlikely it all, and you may accuse me. Persons may excuse me have pointed out if I am suspicious ned the lesson in a

more my heart may increase your stop now. I have you to believe in the best years of my life that I have been but except the one you believe me is nearly dead. Brought unto the bitter self confiding love to shelter myself no right to hope, I had still less my name. Is it self-questioning and a hope is fast growing had been conscious have dared to love am innocent and have refused my thing now but tell I may not suspect receive you. dian and married as spending a winter, which had disengaged after the re- e, and soon after died. Our home was, and three years my sister, who was other's love for me, but unscrupulous influence over her remembrance which had childhood. All my left to my mother, giving the bulk of it a competence for wants were the wife will was in the peculiar handwriting, who was a junior lawyer. Shortly mother, who of my brother-in-law and had him draw certain property about that her husband proceeds of it even requested him not to do the work rough draft and promising to re-

turn next day. Business detained him for several days and he was taken sick and died. Mother had kept the draft he prepared and told me to write the will, which I did. She signed it and I got the same old servants to witness to it, but did not take the precaution to read it over to them, nor were their signatures affixed in my mother's presence. The previous will was destroyed. My sister was not to be informed of the change, but in a moment of tenderness mother told her of the new will, and showed her the draft of it, which she had preserved. My sister kept the draft of the will, which was dated, and at once showed it to her husband, though she promised to be secret. When my mother died my brother-in-law at once submitted a will for probate, which gave me a third, my sister a third, and himself the other third of the property. His was dated the 18th of March, the one in my possession was dated the 25th of April, and I never thought but that mine would be accepted as my mother's last will and testament. I did not dream that the other will was a forgery until I noticed the date, which was two days after that on which the original draft was made by the lawyer in the presence of mother and myself. I knew that it could not have been executed on the day named, as I had been with mother all day and knew her intentions so well. At any rate, the will which I held was more recent than the other, and was consequently legal. I have no doubt that my brother-in-law believed that mother had dated her will on the day indicated in the rough draft, which he obtained from my sister, and expected to void it by producing the later one, but in this he made a mistake; the will I held was ahead in point of time. He then examined the document, and finding it in my writing, came to me and said if I pressed it he would be obliged to prove it was a forgery. He was willing to compromise, he said, with a sneer, and give me half of the estate. Maddened by his accusation, I knocked him down and threw him out of the house into the street. He followed up his threats and the case came up in the courts. His forgery was so clever that experts could not tell which was which. The witnesses were examined and remembered signing several documents, particularly one with very "flourishy" writing. The forged will was shown them, and they recognized it, thinking no doubt that it was the one they witnessed before mother changed her plans. They remembered signing something for me, but it was brought out that it was not in my mother's presence, and the result of the trial was to uphold the bogus will. This left me under the suspicion of having forged a will in order to defraud my sister and her husband. I refused to touch a cent of the money, and taking only what was absolutely mine without any reference to a will, I came to Canada to finish my studies and escape the suspicions of those who knew me in the old days. I have not changed my name, nor become a fugitive, but the black suspicion rests upon me and has clouded my life. The main points of what I tell you are capable of proof. Over

one hundred thousand dollars await my order, in my native town, but I would rather die than draw a cent of it. As long as it is untouched, while I earn my bread, I feel that it is a proof of my innocence. Even for your sake I would not take a cent of that money. It has perjured my sister, made a forger of her husband, branded me as a scoundrel, and tainted my father's honored name. That I have not killed the cursed villain who has brought this about is because I have avoided him, but that I have been able to avoid him is proof that, despite your fears, I am not so violent as you think. Were it not for the disgrace that has come to my name, and that you do not love me, I could thank Heaven for the reverses which sent me to Fellersburg and taught me to appreciate your worth and my weaknesses. As it now is, the unjust and shameful sorrows of the past are to be increased tenfold by my loving and losing you. If your fear of me is only caprice, do not keep me in this agony of suspense; if it is such that you cannot overcome, I will leave your father's house and annoy you no more.

Remember, Dolly, my darling—I can call you that either in hope or in farewell—remember, my love for you is not the idle passion of a boy nor the transient fancy of one who can love lightly and often. It is a passion which cannot die, and will live on to give me either joy or misery, and your final answer must decide which it shall be. I do not believe you can fear that my love will not last; it may sometimes pain you with its jealousy and exactions, but it will never prove false, nor will it fail you in those hours when love looks to love for the response which shall be happiness and life itself. I dare not appeal to your sympathy for my lonely life, lest you may think I am begging where I should woo. You know my story, and can judge whether my misfortunes and sacrifices merit your scorn or if they further excite your fear. I have nothing to offer but my heart and the devotion of my life. My hunger for love and kindness has become, since I learned to love you, the suffering of the famished wanderer who sees just beyond his dying grasp everything for which he hungers and thirsts. I cannot, do not, ask you to wreak your life by bestowing it on me; if you find no happiness in the thought of going through the world hand in hand with me, tell me so, and though I suffer I will not reproach you.

Good-bye—oh my darling, do not let it be for long. Pity me, and do not say that it shall be for ever. Your love is everything to me—life, joy, hope! Adieu! If I write more the weak, bitter tears which are unmanning me will fall upon the page where I say fare well to all I hold dear, to the only one I can ever love; yet I dare not close without beseeching you to remember the stricken, lonely life which to-night is praying that your answer will not doom it to end without that share of happiness which, even on earth, God grants to men. Dolly, dear, sweet, happy, bright-faced Dolly! good-bye!

L. M. S.  
A great big tear fell upon the sheet, and

a sob which could be heard by her neighbors startled Dolly from her reverie. Wiping her eyes she gazed out of the window, and then looking around to see if any one had noticed her emotion, she put Lucien's letter in her pocket.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured, "I wish I hadn't left home. But then if I hadn't run away he never would have written that letter." Her pretty hands were clasped in her lap. Looking out of the window she saw nothing but the haggard, despairing face which met her as she left her room that morning. "Poor fellow! How he must have suffered," she thought, "and I do love him! I can't get away from it. There is no use running away from him, for I love him better when I think of him than when I see him. What a cruel thing his sister must be to let him bear the disgrace of having people think he forged a will when she knows better. What a dear old cross-patch he is anyway!" and Dolly smiled in her happy way.

A couple of hours' ride brought her to the little city where her friend lived, and when she left the train she told the hackman to drive her to the post-office, and the next mail carried to Fellersburg this tender little lead-penciled note:

Dear Pappie,—Please meet me on Monday afternoon at Belkton. I am homesick already. Tell Mr. Strange not to be cross to the children or I'll scold him when I come back. Tell Mamie to be extra good to you while I am gone. Love to her and to dear, darling old Pappie.

Yours loving, DOLLY.

Her school chum was overjoyed to see her, and it was almost dawn before their busy tongues were quiet. In the mutual bursts of confidence Dolly, with many blushes, described Lucien and his queer ways, and the girls discussed him from every standpoint.

"Oh, I think he must be just lovely," cried Dolly's friend. "I envy you; indeed I do. Such a romantic lover, and then he must be so handsome and stern and intellectual looking. I just love those held-in kind of men; they never get monotonous."

"Pshaw, Laura, don't go on so. I never said he was handsome. He is a tall, bony, ugly-looking man, and when he is around I like him and hate him in the same minute, and if I didn't fight with him I suppose I would put my hand in his and sit and look at him in silent adoration and make an awful goose of myself. Do you know, Laura, that I can actually feel that he is around whenever he is in the house!"

"I'm sure you'll marry him, Dolly," exclaimed the sprightly Laura. "He is just your style, and I expect if I am ever invited to come and witness your matri-

monial felicity I will find you so wrapped up in your romantic doctor that I will either have to come home or die of envy."

So they talked and talked and talked, and poor little Dolly began building castles in the air, and Laura's thoughtless advice made her yield to thoughts of love. After her friend and bed-fellow had gone to sleep Dolly drew Lucien's letter, no mention of which had been made to her chum, from her pocket and read it over again. Sitting up in her night-dress, her dark eyes full of love and tears, she vowed she would make him so happy that he would forget the sorrows of the past. Kneeling beside the bed she thanked God that she had been blessed more than all other women in the love of Lucien and her father. Then in serene happiness she slept, unconscious that when Fate seemed kindest it is often but the peaceful lull before an awful storm of sorrow.

Lucien, too, was sleeping in the white farm-house in Fellersburg, unconscious that he was beloved. Worn out by the tears and hopes which had torn his heart through the long day, and held him wakeful through the early night, he dreamed of her, and was sorry to awake and find it was but a dream.

## CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. BLAGG'S "CRIPPIE."

Dolly left home on Thursday, and all day the house was desolate, and Jo, returning at night, was disconsolate. Lucien, nervous and irritable, could hardly work through his work on Friday, and when school closed, gave silent thanks that for two days he could think of Dolly undisturbed by the noisy children. As he was leaving the school-house a ragged, dirty-faced boy stood waiting for him at the gate.

"Please, sir," he said, "I'm Mrs. Blagg's boy, and mother wants you to come up and see Cripple."

"Who is Mrs. Blagg and Cripple, and why do they want me to come and see them?" inquired Lucien, coldly.

"Please, sir," the boy stammered, his awkwardness increased by Lucien's hauteur, "we live up the Belkton road—up to Drunken Archie's, what's dead. He was my father."

"Yes; but what do you want me to come up there for?"

"Mother's sick and can't go out washin', and Cripple is awful bad and mother wants you to doctor her. Mother say Cripple is dyin', and is cryin' all the time," added the boy, looking down.

"Who is Cripple, my little boy?" Lucien's voice was kind, and he put his hand on the little fellow's frowzy head

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## XXL

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and turned the dirty face up toward his.  
"Why, don't you know Crippie Blagg?"  
asked the boy, wonderingly, as he tried to  
look into Lucien's face, and blushed and  
shut his eyes. "Her—her as is—her  
back's broke."

"Why don't you get the Belkton doc  
tor?" I'm not a doctor yet," said Lucien,  
still looking into the boy's face.

"He won't come, please sir. He says  
he's bin so much and hain't been paid for  
it, and he sez nobody can do nuthin' for  
Crippie 'cause her back's broke; and  
mother heerd you was a doctor and sed  
mobe you'd come and tell her wet to  
do."

"I'll be up as soon as I can get my  
supper. Tell me how to find the place."

"It's about two miles up the road,"  
said the boy, jerking his thumb over his  
shoulder, "in a log-house. It's the only  
one on the line, and you can't miss it,  
please sir, and there's a pig-pen just by  
the gate, but we hain't got no pig now."

"I'm afraid I can't do much, but  
I'll go," Lucien thought, as he walked down the hill. "It will keep me from  
thinking of Dolly."

He ate his supper in silence, and without  
out explaining his errand told Jo he was  
going for a walk and might not be home  
till late. As he wended his way toward  
"Drunken Archie's" he thought of Dolly,  
and wondered where she was and if she  
was thinking of him. He met several  
wagons, and the drivers good-naturedly  
bade him "Good evening," but startled  
from his reverie, he made very curt re  
plies. At last he reached an old tumble  
down log house, surrounded by a potato  
patch. The road side was used as a chip-yard,  
and two wheels of a wagon and the ruins  
of a sleigh were reminiscences of the days  
when Drunken Archie had a farm. The  
fence corners were full of rank weeds.  
The rail fence, patched and propped up  
with poles and slabs, recorded Drunken  
Archie's neglect, and squalid misery was  
stamped on every gnarly stick of unsplittable  
wood before the open door. The  
house consisted of two log shanties, built  
at different times, in different styles, and  
though they were intended to join, decay  
was fast pulling them apart.

Entering the open door, Lucien found  
an empty room without a floor. The  
cracks between the logs gave him a  
glimpse of the interior of the adjoining  
apartment. A broken stove, a rickety  
table, a corner cupboard with a few un  
washed dishes on the shelves, some ragged  
garments hanging on pegs driven in the  
rough-hewn walls, and a couple of com  
fortless beds made up the furniture. The  
inmates had not heard him enter, and as  
he pushed open the door Mrs. Blagg

turned wearily in the bed and moaned,  
"Is that you, Duncan?"

"No," answered Lucien, softly; "your  
little boy told me you wanted to see me."

"Oh, you are the young doctor teachin'  
school up at the 'Berg. I am glad you've  
come, but I'm 'feared both Crippie and  
me is past heip." Her voice was  
faint, and her homely, rugged face  
twitched with pain as she spoke.  
Her feeble hand reached out and  
tenderly smoothed down the sheet,  
disclosing the shoulders and face of a  
child. "That's poor little Crippie," she  
gasped.

"I'll see what I can do for you first,  
and then attend to the little one."

"No, no, doctor; Crippie first, or she'll  
be past helpin'." Struggling to sit up in  
the bed, she fell back breathless.

"Keep still, Mrs. Blagg, and tell me  
what ails you," answered Lucien, sharply,  
as he sat on the edge of the bed and  
counted her pulse.

He found she had malarial fever, which  
neglect, hard work, and insufficient food  
had assisted to reduce her to death's door.  
She could not think of herself, and begged  
him to look at Crippie. Lucien reached  
over the moaning mother and lifted the  
cripple from the bed. Though twelve  
years old, the stunted and deformed child  
had not the weight of a healthy baby.  
Her brown eyes shone with feverish lustre  
from the ghastly little face, and he saw at  
once that she could not last many days.

"It makes my back better," whispered  
the cripple.

"What makes it better, little one?"

"Bein' lifted," she answered, grate  
fully.

"How long has your back been crooked,  
Crippie?"

"Ever since I kin remember. Father  
broke it when he was drunk." A fit of  
coughing convulsed the childish frame,  
and as soon as it had ceased Lucien re  
placed her on the bed.

"Kin—ye—help 'er?" gasped the  
mother.

"She is past human help, Mrs. Blagg."

"Not dead?" cried the mother, starting  
up frantically and bending over the mo  
tionless child to listen for a heart-beat.

"Lie down, or you will smother her,"  
he answered, as he placed the poor woman  
back on her dirty pillow. "Keep quiet,  
and I will go to Belkton and get some  
medicine for you both. Send your little  
boy for some of the neighbor women to  
help you."

"I fer—got—Dun—can's—gone—to  
John's—won't—be—back—three—days."

"Who will come and help? You can  
not be left alone to-night."

"I d-don't-know—they're—all—tired—  
—ev'-helpin'."

Lucien waited no longer, but strode hastily towards Belkton. The doctor was not at home. However, Lucien secured some medicines at the little store, bought some bread, meat, and tea, slipped a flask of brandy into his pocket, and hurried back to his patients. Outside of the village another miserable wayside shanty attracted his attention. An old woman sat smoking at the door, and Lucien walked up to her and inquired if she knew Mrs. Blagg. The old woman was well acquainted, and proceeded to say so at great length, winding up with:

"She's sick, poor critter, an' I bin a thinkin' of runnin' down an' givin' her a hand."

Lucien begged her to do so, and offered to pay her if she would go at once.

"No, young man, y'don't need t'hire me t'do a good turn t'nybur if the can't pay fer t'emselves. But I can't vo atore t'morry mornin'."

He arranged to remain with Mrs. Blagg himself until she came, and was hurrying away, when the crone motioned for him to come back, and in a confidential whisper inquired, "Some kin o' her'n, mebbe?"

"None, I assure you; never saw her until to-night," Lucien answered curtly, and hurried away, though she had remarked, "I didn't ketch yer name, mister," and he could hear the old dame shattering on.

Back at Mrs. Blagg's, he gave his patients some medicine and started a fire in the broken stove. Beef tea and gentle stimulants revived the poor woman, and even Cripple coughed and moaned less. There was no light save that from the stove, and as the night wore on, and his patients required less of his attention, the ghosts of his fancy began to people the squalid house. He could sit still no longer; he walked up and down the room. The loose boards creaked beneath his feet, and Mrs. Blagg, turning in her semi-delirious sleep, muttered: "Don't strike me, Archie; fer God's sake, don't strike me!"

The fire in the stove went out, and the room was lighted only by a struggling moonbeam which crept through a crevice in the logs. Suddenly Mrs. Blagg sat up in the bed waving an imaginary weapon and shrieking:

"Hit 'er, will ye? She haint your'n, hey? I've bin false to ye, hey? Yell hit 'er will ye? Ye will, hey? Ye drunkin' brute, ye'll hit 'er, will ye? See her broke back! Ye did that when ye first started gittin' drunk, and I didn't kill ye, but I will now if ye tech her! Keep back, ye loatin' skunk, or I'll split yer

head open, as sure as my name's Janet Blagg! Back! Curse ye!"—her voice was like the shrill scream of a maniac—"Back, ye!—There, I've killed ye! Cripple won't get beaten any more! Drunken Archie!"

Lucien stood aghast for a moment listening to her fearful words, then seizing Mrs. Blagg he forced her to lie down, and she was soon asleep, leaving Lucien to wonder over what seemed to be a part of her history revealed.

It grew darker. Frequent groping had taught Lucien the location of the bottles and spoons, and by fumbling he could find them. Objects in the room could be detected because where they were the darkness was a denser black. His walking disturbed his patients; he would sit down. Cripple, choking, called him up. Returning he could scarce find his chair, the room was so dark. As he sat there he grew drowsy, though he thought of Dolly, and her bright face was before him. It was getting chilly. What was that sound! Surely it is some one stealing in the door! No, it is imagination: it is too dark to see as far as the door!

The boards in the floor are creaking!

Pshaw! it is probably a rat. Something cold touches his hand; he strikes with his fist at the air, and then puts his outstretched hands gropingly before him; but now he cannot move: an icy chill runs through his veins: a hand is on his throat; he feels his hands grasping the cold, clammy jowls of his toe; he cannot breathe, he is choking; his head swims, but his dizzy brain hears a voice hissing in his ear, "Drunken Archie's caught ye here, ye scoundrel; I'll kill ye for it. Curse ye, let go my throat. Cripple's your'n. She haint mine, and I'll finish ye both!"

With an awful effort Lucien leaps to his feet. The four small panes of glass in the east window are red with the morning sun. The bed, with its heavy-breathing sick ones, is indistinct in the dim light. He is alone, and has shaken himself free from a dream—one of those awfully real dreams which come to those who sleep while they are on watch.

Before six the old woman was there and he gave her instructions about the medicine, promised to return on Sunday morning, and then fled from her questions.

He was in time for breakfast, and ate heartily and felt content. Jo asked no questions, and it did not strike Lucien that his night's absence was likely to create suspicion until he went up to his room and saw his unshaven face reflected in the looking-glass. The bed was untouched, and he knew that Mrs. Felder

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would be aware that he was out all night. He had better explain. No, he wouldn't. Jo would think he was a hypocrite parading his good qualities. The sense of having done right was strong within him and he was satisfied.

Jo eyed him as he came down to dinner but made no inquiries, and soon drifted into pleasant talk.

Sunday morning Lucien took his breakfast, and with a brief excuse, said he would be gone for an hour, perhaps for all day. Jo looked curious but still held his tongue.

As Lucien walked towards Drunken Archie's, he felt how pleasant it is to do good quietly. The pleasure of concealing a good action he found to be greater far than that of parading it.

His patients were both improved. Janet Blagg would live, he said to himself, and Crippe would die. While his assistant nurse went home to fix up her house for "the boss," as she called her grave digging husband, Lucien watched over the cripple and her mother.

"You've been terble kind to us," gasped poor Janet, "it it hadn't been for we'd bin dead afore now."

"Say no more about it," he answered, quickly. Remembering how it had eased poor Crippe when he lifted her the day before, he took her from the bed and held her in his arms. She stared at him silently, thankfully. Her burning eyes constantly watched his face, and he began to talk to her as a ralet.

"Far, far away," he began, "there is a place where people never get sick and little girls never have crooked backs or cry out with pain."

"It ain't Uncle John's, is it?" asked Crippe. "They're rich, but they won't give us nuthin'."

"No; it is away, away off beyond the sky, and there is a nice house for everyone to live in, and they never get hungry, and it doesn't get dark or cold."

"Not at night time?" whispered the little sufferer.

"There is no night there, and the sun never goes down and people don't get tired or sleepy."

"Do they get drunk?" interrupted Crippe's eager whisper.

Lucien was inexpressibly shocked, and his face showed his surprise. "Oh! no, Crippe, they are all good people. God lives there, and everybody loves Him and obeys Him. God loves little girls, and one time, when He was on earth and going around teaching people to be good, He nursed lots of little girls, like I am nursing you, and told them that He loved them and wanted them to come and live with Him."

"Was they pretty little girls?" Crippe's brown eyes closed, as if she were sleepy, and her voice sounded weary and listless.

"Yes, all little girls are pretty when God loves them, because they are good." "I want to lay down with mother. Mother likes me."

Lucien, without thinking that the bairn had misunderstood him, placed her beside her mother, and watched with moistened eyes Janet's heart-broken cares.

"Well, young man, I'm here agin. and kin take care on 'em for a long spell now, if you want to go home or go seein' yer girl," squeaked his returned assistant, as she pushed open the door.

Lucien could stand the disagreeable and self-imposed duties of the sick-room, but could not endure the fusilade of questions and the endless gossip of the old woman, and quickly fled, promising to return as soon as school was over on Monday.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### LITTLE CRIPPIE'S DEATH.

As soon as school was dismissed on Monday Lucien hurried back to Mrs. Blagg's, expecting to get home in time for supper. He did not know that Jo had received a letter from Dolly telling him to meet her at Belkton that night, nor did he see Jo's happy face as his team jogged past "Drunken Archie's," while he went to meet his darling. When he lifted Dolly out of old Humstir's stage he almost wept for joy, and Dolly was delighted, and caressed her father, careless of onlookers, till the stage driver remarked: "Seems as if you n'er girl hed bin separated a good long spell, the way ye take on."

Jo made no reply, but helped Dolly into his buggy and prepared to start for home. But Humstir was not to be shaken off so easily. "How's that new schoolmaster o' yours? gittin' on?"

"All right," answered Jo, gathering up his lines. "Terble secret sort of a feller. Thought mebbe he'd turn out bad. Seemed su'thing hid in the way he acted comin' down. Got a queer face, hain't he? Guess he's all right. Like enuff he is. Guess mebbe he is, begosh."

"I guess so; good-night," answered Jo, as he started up his team, and Humstir had to get away from the wheels.

"How have you all been, Pappie, without me?"

"Nuthin' to brag on, Dolly. I bin terble lonesome, and yer mother's bin troubled with her shoulder more'n usual, and the schoolmaster's bin ramblin' around, an' no tellin' where he's bin, and away nights,

an' actin' ter'ble queer." Jo felt a pang of conscience in telling tales about Lucien, but the message to him in Dolly's letter had set him thinking.

"Humstir seems to remember Mr. Strange. I guess he wouldn't answer the old bore's questions, and got him mad." Dolly's unguarded defence of Lucien made her father uneasy, but he was silent. He could think of nothing to say until they were nearing Drunken Archie's shanty.

"I guess Janet's sick or suthin'. She wasn't up to do the washin' this mornin', an' yer ma and the girl had to tackle it, and with all the hired help it was hard on 'em."

"Maybe she is sick, Pappie. Let me run in and see."

Jo stopped at the gate and Dolly went in. The sun was just setting, and the last bars of light were streaming through the little square windows at the end of the house. As Dolly entered the outer room she heard voices and paused. Surely that was Lucien! She glanced through the crevice, and with her gloved hands resting on the whitewashed logs, watched the scene in the other room.

Lucien had the moaning Cripple in his arms, and in an old rocking chair was swinging to and fro. He gave the child something from a cracked tea-cup and was trying to put her to sleep.

"Where's the place where nobody gits sick?" she asked.

"Away, away off on the other side of the sky, where God lives," answered Lucien, solemnly, brushing the matted hair from her damp forehead.

"Hev you ever bin there?"

"No, Cripple, people have to die to go there."

"Did father go there when he died?"

"I don't know. I suppose he did, and if he was good, God would let him stay," Lucien replied, indefinitely.

"Will I go there if I die?" she whispered.

"Oh, yes, Cripple; God likes little girls, and when He was here, carried them in His arms like I am carrying you."

Poor little Cripple moaned pitifully, and then opening wide her eyes, whispered in hopeless self-abasement:

"But they was pretty little girls, you sed, not broke-backs, like me."

"Little one, God loves you all the more because you are weak and sickly, and He will make you well when you go to Him."

"An' will I see father there?"

"I guess so."

"Will he get drunk and beat me'n mother?" Cripple's hands were clasped, and her eyes slowly dimming with weariness, brightened in fear, as she thought

of heaven disturbed by the home-coming of Drunken Archie. A convulsive sob from Janet was followed by the wail, "Oh! Cripple, Cripple, Archie'd no' strike ye in heaven. 'Twas drink made him do it here."

"Does God love mother?" questioned the child. "I love mother, I like her better'n God."

"No, no; you mustn't say that. You must love God best. You are soon going to Him and He will love you like your mother does."

"I want mother too. She likes me best, 'cause my back's broke, and nobody likes me. I don't want t' go alone."

"You won't be alone, Cripple. There are thousands and thousands of beautiful angels, dressed in white, and they will come to meet you," urged Lucien, his eyes dim with tears.

"Will they point their fingers at me an' laugh an' call me 'Hunchy,' like the girls did when I went to school?"

The hopeless tone, the fear which made poor Cripple tremble when she thought of leaving the protecting arms of her mother, even to go to her Maker; her bitter memory of the taunts and laughter of her childhood tormentors; her awful apparition of Drunken Archie beating her in heaven, melted Lucien's heart. "Poor, wounded bird," he sobbed, gathering her closer in his arms "thank God your short and sorrowful life is almost over."

Cripple clasped his face between her wasted hands, and her great brown eyes looked into his. "Do you cry because yer sorry for me?"

"Yes, Cripple," he sobbed.

"Does God ever cry?"

"Yes, little one; He wept once when one of His friends died."

"Then I love God—and you—and Duncan—but mother most. Give me to mother," she gasped, and her head fell back on his shoulder.

Reverently he placed the cripple beside her mother. "Mother," she whispered, faintly, in her unfaltering loyalty, "I love you best." The mother's lips were pressed close to Cripple's cold face. The little hand stole feebly up until it caressingly touched the mother's neck; the stiffening lips moved with dying gratitude and tenderness, and slowly the faltering breath, as it passed away, framed the word, "M-o-t-h-e-r," which came like a sign of farewell from a soul already far distant; a beam from the setting sun shimmered through the logs and over the little pinched face; the brown eyes were no longer bright. Cripple was dead.

The wail of anguish from the agonized mother startled Lucien from his intent watchfulness of Cripple, and he was beg-

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Lucien stood speechless with surprise as Jo put his hand on his shoulder in the loving way in which he was wont to caress Dolly, and said in an awestruck whisper: "Is the little one dead?"

"Yes; she died just now."

"I've bin watchin' ye along of Dolly from outside; Dolly called me t' come. I didn't think it was in ye. Poor little critter that she wuz."

Jo was not quite coherent in his remarks, and the back of his rough hand was often drawn across his eyes. "Say," he broke in, "jist git into my buggy and go to the village and tell the feller at the furniture store to git ready to bury this poor little thing and I'll pay for it." Lucien stood awkwardly asking a question and wondering if Dolly had no word or look for him. With her arms wrapped around Janet, she still sobbed as if her heart would break. Lucien's tell-tale eyes betrayed him, and Jo in his softness of heart touched Dolly's shoulder, saying, "Dolly, the schoolmaster wants to speak to you, mebbe."

"Not now! not now! cried poor Dolly, and Lucien rushed away, his last hope shattered. Quickly returning from the village, his heart full of despair, he wished he were dead instead of Cripple. In the shanty Dolly was alone with Janet. Jo having gone to get some of the neighbors to "lay-out" the dead and watch over the sick. As he entered the darkened room Dolly's arms were thrown about his neck, and Dolly's face nestled close to his.

"I do love you, and I never will tease you again; I coudn't stay away another day; forgive me for having given you so much pain, for I love you so much!" whispered Dolly, half crying and half coaxingly.

Lucien's strong arms clasped Dolly in an embrace of frantic joy. "Dolly! Dolly! mine! You love me? Thank God I am so blest."

The coming of the watchers called by Jo Felder disturbed the nows, and Jo himself called them in. They rode together between Jo and Lu, striving to keep her Dolly in mind.

"Young man," exclaimed Jo regretfully, "I did a mean thing to-night; I told Dolly about you running around nights, and kind' r hinted that it was authin' agin' ye. I take it back, an' I'll never be so brash agin'."

Emboldened by this, Lucien told of his

love for Dolly, and she whispered to her father that it was all her fault, and insisted on telling part of the story told in the letter.

Jo was interested, and what he had seen of Lucien in Mrs. Blagg's shanty had converted him. He told them he wouldn't quarrel with them and, with a great big sigh, wished the lovers a happy life.

Mrs. Felder, when she heard of it, questioned Dolly, and was shocked to find that it had happened in a death-room.

"Why, Dolly! Bless my gracious! And you assepted him to a wake! Goodness me, ye'll be a widder in less'n a year if ye marry 'm. Yer so ign'rant, though I bin a teachin' ye fer years. To take him at a wake, or the same's one! Why couldn't ye wait a few minutes, and say 'ye's a comin' home, and not spoiled yer whole future by bein' a widder within a year!"

Mrs. Felder was suffering absolute anguish, but Dolly was too happy to share it, and kissed her mother "good night," and in a moment of uncalculating tenderness slipped into Lucien's room and kissed him good night also. He looked surprised and flattered, but came very near telling her she should not do suchreckless things.

Dolly, poor little thing, was becoming very much in love, and poor little sweetheart, she was foolishly showing it.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

"Howyer feelin', Looshen?" chirped Mrs. Felder next morning when her prospective son-in-law came down to breakfast. She was alone in the dining-room, and had resolved to put herself on a more familiar footing with the young man, who had hitherto been successful in keeping her at a distance.

Lucien shivered with disgust, but answered, with a forced smile, that he was feeling very well indeed.

"So you'n Dolly air goin' to make a match of it, air ye? 'Tain't no surprise t'me," she simpered, knowingly. "I've bin a watchin' both'n ye for a long spell, an' I know'd she'd git ye! I know'd it all th' time! I seed what was agoin' on, I did! Of course Jo wuz agin' it, but I wuz fer ye all th' time, I wuz. I knowed you could cut Tommy Watson out quicker'n winkin', an as fur as Dolly's consarned, I knowed she'd ruther hav a doctor ner a farmer any time. You've got a smart one, you hav! Dolly's slick as they make 'em! Ye needn't be afraed of me; I've bin a helpin' it on all I could, I kin tell ye that."

Lucien was horrified. So Dolly and her mother had been in league, and he had been chosen simply because he was to be a doctor, not a farmer. "I knowed she'd git ye," rang in his ears. He had been captured by artifice! And "she was slick as they make 'em." Could it be possible that he had been trapped by an artful girl? He turned from the silly woman, looked out of the window, and was wondering bitterly if Dolly was simply an accomplished coquette, when a gentle hand touched his arm, and, turning quickly, he saw Dolly's pretty face.

"You do not look happy," she said, and a cloud passed over her fair face.

In a moment he had forgotten his fears, and, clasping the hand on his arm, he whispered lovingly: "I have every reason to be the happiest of men, but clouds darken the brightest skies, and one passed over my thoughts just as you came in."

At breakfast Jo was not talkative, and several times Lucien caught the old man's clear blue eyes fixed critically on his face. Dolly, too, had little to say, but she spoke so gently to him, and was so kind in anticipating his wants, that his heart beat jubilantly, and he was again in love's trustful heaven.

"It's a good thing Janet Blagg's cripple is dead; she wuz a ter'ble drag on her mother," Mrs. Felder remarked, in her shrill, metallic voice. "The little critter couldn't uf bin any help to her, only a holdback an' a trouble. Like 'nuff Janet's glad to be rid'n the pesky bother she's hed with that hunchback of her'n."

"Oh, mother!" cried Dolly, reproachfully. "Poor Janet was heartbroken. She loved poor little Cripple, and will be lost without her. Janet's whole heart was set on her poor little girl."

"Mebbe! Mebbe!" warbled the old dame. "Like enuf she took on just fer show, but she's glad all the same, an' I don't blame 'er. I'd bin ter'ble relieved meself if 'tud bin me."

Dolly said no more, but her deep blue eyes said to Lucien: "We know better; we saw Janet's sorrow, and know that it was real."

"A-talkin' about cripples," resumed Mrs. Felder, victoriously, "When I wuz tendin' Margit Elizabeth Slowcomb through her third trouble—Margit Elizabeth was Joel here's first cousin on his mother's side, and looked ter'ble like Joel's mother's people—I knowed the baby hed authin' the matter 'th it's spiney column, an' I told the doctor—Doctor Williams was tendin' her—Margit Elizabeth alluz hed Doctor Williams and put ter'ble store by his doin's, though I alluz told her that old Williams couldn't tend

to no sick cat fer me, as fur's I was concerned, fur I knowed he was nuthin' more'n an old Granny Grunt as fur teedin' on sich troubles as Margit Elizabeth was a hevin' was concerned, an' I cud tell of ter'ble mistakes that he'd made, along of more'n a dozen of wimmin as I've bin a helpin' of through ther troubles, but I don't want to say nuthin' agin' the doctor as'll spile his practice, though of course I don't set no store by him as fur as I'm concerned, but as I was a-sayin', I knowed as ther was authin' wrong 'uv Margit Elizabeth's baby's spiney column, an' I told Dr. Williams as it 'ud be a mercy tlet the baby kinder not live on account'n the ter'ble trouble it 'ud be to Margit, but he sed he guest mebbe he knowed as much, if not more'n I did bout'n his bizzness, an' that very remark has lost him more'n twenty wimmin as I've bin advisin' of an' a helpin' through ther troubles, an' he knows it too, fer I told him when I was waitin' on Jerushy Maria Higgins, no longer ago than a year ago last twenty-fourth uv May, an' he'd bin bespoken for a week afore I knowed she was expectin' me t'help her through her trouble, or I'd uv set her agin' him, an' he give me a ter'ble easy answer, but as I was a tellin' ye about Margit Elizabeth's third trouble, when I told Dr. Williams that I know'd ther'd beauthin' wrong of its spiney column—

"Mammy, please don't tell us any more," Dolly exclaimed beseechingly, as she rose from the table. "Mr. Strange has so much of that sort of thing in his medical studies, that he isn't likely to want it with his breakfast."

"I kin tell ye this, as fur as I'm concerned, though I haint no doctor, an' I don't pretend to be," exclaimed Mrs. Felder, excitedly, "yet as fur as I'm concerned, I'm willin' to say that if more wimmin' knowed how to help one another through ther' troubles, ther'd be fewer'n these granny grunts like at that old silly old Williams—"

Lucien and Dolly had escaped, and Jo, who had been leaning back in his chair, rose up to go.

"Mother," he said in his kind way, "you shouldn't take on that way afore Loushen and Dolly! The young feller'll git a prejudice agin' ye if ye go on gabbin' and lecturin' like ye've bin doin'. He haint used to it, an' it'll hurt Dolly with him, an' he'll think she hain't hed no bringin' up. Go kinder light fer a spell till he git's used to ye, like we air."

"Who's bin agin' Loushen all through but you; I bin fer him right along, an' as fer as I'm concerned—"

But Jo had gone.

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That evening Dolly and Lucien sat on the rustic seat in the orchard by the river. The warm wind was sighing through the trees, and the rippling of the water and the creaking of the pines on the other bank sounded the approach of a storm. Dolly had been silent for some time, and now her hand, which Lucien held so lovingly in his, trembled. "You think mammy awfully rude and talkative," she began hurriedly, and as if it were a hard thing to say, "but she loves me, and is proud of me, and wants you to like her, and—and—and you don't mind, do you dear?" Dolly's soft hand was on his cheek, as was her caressing fashion, and her pleading face nestled close to his shoulder.

"I confess that she startles me little, but don't speak of it little sweetheart—"

"But I must speak of it, Lucien dear, she is my mother, and I could read your face this morning while she was talking—you were awfully disgusted, and Lucien dear,"—Dolly stammered, and her unsteady voice sank to a whisper—"you did not like me so well for a while—"

"On, Dolly"—interrupted Lucien, re-proachfully, but Dolly's little hand was placed over his mouth—

"Please don't. Please let me finish," she cried. "I am not apologizing for Mammy, for she doesn't need it, but you aren't used to her ways, and I never noticed how odd some of her ways are until I saw how they affected you. And yet you, with your great knowledge of people, should know that her weaknesses are really virtues, for she hasn't deceit enough even to hide the words that keep coming into her head. Mammy is as honest as the sun, and she loves me so that she thinks I can do everything I like, or be anybody I like. This morning she was only trying, in her queer way, to show you that she, too, shouldn't be forgotten, and was telling of her doing in sick-rooms and everything, so that you would think Dolly's mother was someone to be proud of, too. Please judge kindly, Lucien, for I love you and Mammy both, and can't bear to think that you are ashamed of either of us, if you are it would be better for us to part, and that would be so hard."

Dolly's tearful face was gently uplifted by Lucien's hand, and as he kissed away her sorrow, he told her that he didn't mind her mother's oddities; he would soon come used to them; anyhow he would like her for her daughter's sake.

Comforted by his promises she talked merrily of the future, and they were happy.

The wind was moaning loudly and the pines were creaking and groaning before

the rising storm. A few drops pattered down on the leaves at the lovers' feet.

"Come, we must go in," cried Dolly, and they ran up the little hill together, hand-in-hand. Jo was rocking on the veranda, looking lonely and desolate. "Pappie feels deserted, don't he?" whispered Dolly, as she sat on her father's knee and stroked his face, "thinking of my ingratitude, running away with Lucien and forgetting you; weren't you?"

"Not that way, Dolly; I wan't reproachin' ye; only thinkin' that I was gettin' old and couldn't expect you to be sittin' on my knee and comfortin' my old days much longer. It makes me feel ter'ble lonesome, little girlie!" Jo's voice was husky, and big tears stood in his honest eyes.

"I'll never leave you, Pappie. If I go away you'll come too. He will, won't he Lucien?"

"Of course," answered Lucien, eagerly, for he had been moved by Jo's sadness—then with a groan he thought of Mrs. Felder accompanying him to a city.

"I'm afeerd not, Dolly; I reckon 'twouldn't do nohow! Your mother'n me is too old ever to git into new ways. Good night little one, good night Lucien! My baby don't mind me," he said tenderly, as he stooped and again kissed Dolly good night.

The rain beating through the lattice drove the lovers indoors with Jo. The storm was beginning in earnest. So, too, was the storm which was to make desolate poor Dolly's life. 'Twas but a year later that the tempest of shame and sorrow shook Jo's household and robed his girlish pet in widow's weeds.

#### CHAPTER XXIV. BAD BLOOD AND HARD BLOWS.

Next day was Saturday, and Malon Klimmer had a barn-raising, to which Jo Felder had been invited, with a strict injunction to bring both Dolly and the schoolmaster with him.

Malon's farm adjoined his father's, and the festivities which usually accompany such an event were to be held in Peter Klimmer's house, and Lucien objected very strongly to the idea of breaking bread with the barefooted squire. Jourged him to go and avail himself of the opportunity of making a friend of old Peter. Dolly, too, was anxious that he should accompany her.

"I won't go anywhere without you," she said in her sweet, coaxing way, "and I know they will say mean things about us both if we stay away."

"Very well, I'll go, little sweetheart, to be with you; but I will be fiercely jealous

if any one ~~open~~ looks at you, and I know I will act like a bear with a sore head."

"Oh, you mustn't do that; you must promise you won't be cross. You can flirt with Sadie Klimmer all you like, but you will make me feel awfully bad if you glare at everyone who speaks to me. Now you won't, will you?"

Dolly's hands were clasped over Lucien's shoulder and she was looking up at him half in jest and half in earnest.

Lucien stooped and kissed the fair pleader and promised to behave like a little man. With those blue eyes shining on him he could refuse nothing, but he felt that he was making a mistake.

When Jo's buggy stopped at Peter Klimmer's gate, Sadie ran out to meet Dolly and Lucien.

"I made Malon invite you and Mr. Strange, though he said neither of you would come, and I never would have forgiven you if you had stayed away."

Lucien followed Jo to the field where the bents were ready to be raised. Between thirty and forty of the neighbors were assembled, discussing the merits of Malon's big barn and its storage capacity. Neither Malon nor his father paid any attention to Lucien beyond a nod of recognition, and the proud schoolmaster felt very uncomfortable till Tommy Watson took him in hand and introduced him to some of the younger men. Then the real work began, and amidst much joking, a couple of the neighbors "chose sides" preparatory to the usual contest as to which party would first get their "beat" in position. The shouting and ye-ho-ing was immense and the race was just about even. The men with sledge and pin ran along the swaying beams and the side on which Lucien worked was beaten. It was but a trifle, and yet the good natured jokes and lusty bragging of the victors irritated him.

"Schoolmasters hain't as good at raisin' barns as they be in tickin' young 'uns, be they," roared a lusty farmer, as he slapped Lucien on the back. It was hard to stand, but he stood it, and even joined in the laughter which followed.

Peter Klimmer as well as his son had been drinking considerable of the whisky which was being passed around, and the old man's nasty tongue was working pretty freely.

"I heered that this here school master felt pertly big on his muscle and said he was a better man than ennybody round these diggin's," snarled Peter, with a tormenting grin.

"I made no such boast, Mr. Klimmer" retorted Lucien, haughtily.

"I'm a liar, am I?" roared Peter, a "I'm—"

There would have trouble, but the bystanders prevented. Tommy Watson took hold of Lucien's arm and led him away.

"The old fool is full; don't mind what he says," whispered his companion.

Lucien, however, was angered by Tommy's patronage almost as much as by Peter's insult, and answered, bitterly:

"I think I had better leave or the beast will give me some more of his impudence."

"No, don't go; you'll see no more of him, and it'd be talked about if you went away."

The thought that somebody would say he had been frightened detained him, and at Tommy's suggestion he joined the younger men, who were running, jumping and throwing the sledge. Lucien took off his coat and entered with all his might into the sports. His training and science, coupled with his wonderful strength, made him victor in every contest. Test after test was proposed, and still he led them all. Finally a powerful young fellow, whose agility had won the admiration of everybody, suggested a wrestle.

Lucien objected, saying it was rough sport and often led to ill-feeling. It was insisted on, and the student, fresh from the gymnasium of the college, had no difficulty in giving his adversary a couple of heavy falls, which were taken good-naturedly.

Malon Klimmer had heard of his father's difficulty with Lucien, and though he wasted no love on the old man, he shared his dislike of the haughty schoolmaster. If he had not been drinking he would have hesitated, but his anxiety to humiliate Lucien overpowered his discretion, and throwing off his vest he guessed he'd try a fall himself.

Lucien knew there would be a fight before it was over, and declined.

Tommy Watson saw what was brewing, and to dissuade Malon told him that he wouldn't have the ghost of a chance. This made Malon the more dogged in his determination and he suggested that Lucien was afraid to tackle him.

Lucien's crest rose and he politely enquired what style of wrestling he preferred.

"Any kind; rough-and-tumble is good enough for me!" answered Malon, with a look of sullen fierceness, which you may see in the eye of a savage bull-dog.

"Stand back a little way and give us room for a 'catch-as-catch-can,' Lucien called out with a smile and a wave of his hand. The bystanders fell back, but before he had turned to face Malon that burly ruffian had seized him around the waist and had

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what the boys call the "under-holt." It profited him little. Like a flash Lucien encircled Malon's shoulders, and springing backward he almost dragged his opponent off his feet, then seizing him by the hips he gave a sudden wrench, which caused Malon to relax his hold. In another second, before his antagonist could regain his grip or use his strength, Lucien was on his knee and Malon Klimner circled through the air over the schoolmaster's head and fell like a bag of sand on the grass.

A shout of fear and wonder went up, and everybody rushed to see if Malon was hurt. Dazed for a moment, he staggered to his feet, and Lucien politely expressed the hope that he was uninjured. "Git back, curse ye!" roared the infuriated man, as he shoved his sympathizers away. He was standing close to Lucien, and turning sharply struck him a heavy blow in the face. The answering knock felled Malon like an ox, but before anyone could interfere a brutal blow from a stake in the hand of old Peter cut open Lucien's scalp and made him stagger like a drunken man. Recovering himself almost instantly, his bony fist crashed into Peter's eye and was followed by a left-hander on Peter's nose. Thinking there was to be a general fight, he sprang back, the blood streaming over his face, and was caught in the arms of Jo Felder, who had hurried forward to see the cause of the excitement.

"Great heavens! what hav ye bin doin'?" cried Jo, aghast.

"Defending myself from Malon Klimner and his father," he answered, breathlessly, almost choked by the blood streaming down his face.

"I feel dizzy and faint; help me away." Lucien was leaning heavily against Jo, and his voice was thick and uncertain.

"It's a — shame the way you've bin treated," exclaimed the hearty voice of the young man who had first engaged Lucien in a wrestling match, "and ther haint a man here but sez you done the square thing and gave 'em less'n they deserved—here hang onto me, yer dizzy; that — old coward come near doin' for ye. Say, you, Bill, go an' get this feller's hat an' coat, I'm goin' to see him home."

Lucien could scarce stumble along, supported by Jo and his new friend, Reuben Hill, Jennie's brother. Jo bound up Lucien's head with his handkerchief, but the blood still flowed, and it took all their strength to help him into the buggy. Jo climbed up beside him and Reuben Hill went into the house for Dolly. Half a dozen young men came up and expressed their sorrow that a stranger or anybody

else should have been used so badly. Every one exonerated Lucien and condemned Malon and his father, and poor Jo's heart went out to the youth who was struggling so bravely to thank his friends and sit upright on the seat.

Dolly and Sadie came to the gate, and as they caught sight of Lucien's blood besmeared face they both screamed and started back in fear. Sadie cried out, "What is the matter with him?" but Dolly stood holding her hands over her heart, her big blue eyes staring wildly for a moment, and then running to the buggy she clutched her father's knee and moaned, "Oh, Pappie, is he hurt much, he won't die, will he, Pappie?"

"No, child. He'll be all right when we get him home and fix him up."

"Bring him in here; don't take him away like that?" sobbed poor little Sadie.

"No, no, — home," murmured Lucien feebly.

"Your father did that," snorted Rube, angrily, "and he ruther die than be took into your house!"

Sadie covered her face with her hands and turned sobbing away. Dolly clambered over her father's knees and Jo lifted Lucien up while Dolly seated herself on the other side. Forgetful of the curious eyes that watched her, she wiped the blood from his face with many tears and loving words as Jo drove rapidly homeward. As they passed the new bar Jo saw Peter and Malon Klimner bathing their bruised faces in a pail of water. Looking up with a malignant scowl as the buggy passed Peter hissed:

"That sneaking upstart'll pay dear for this!"

Jo made no answer. His face was stern and the hand that held the lines clutched them tightly for a moment as if his fingers itched to grasp the hairy neck of Lucien's assailant.

"Lucien, darling, speak to me," sobbed Dolly. "Pappie, Pappie, I'm so afraid he is going to die!"

"I'm—I'm—bet—ter now," Lucien managed to say. The wind fanned his face and the rapid, easy motion revived him.

"Oh, I'm so glad," Dolly's sobs changed into a hysterical laugh. "He'll get well, won't he Pappie?"

"Yes, Dolly; he's only faint and dizzy from loss of blood. Poor feller, he had pretty rough usage."

Hanging onto Jo's arm Lucien staggered into the house and dropped upon a lounge. Mrs. Felder was in her element, and amidst a flood of questions and many references to similar wounds, bathed the ugly cut with ice-cold water from the well.

Lucien's faintness was over, and he would not permit Jo to go for a doctor, but directed Mrs. Felder to get his pocket case of surgical instruments and put four stitches in the gaping wound. He showed Jo how to shave the edges of the wound and hold it together, and while Dolly sat sobbing in another room the stitches were put in and the plaster applied. Lucien never winced, and as Jo, with white face and trembling hands, left the room he muttered to himself, "That feller's got ter'ble grit. I b'lieve he could be cut up alive an' never wiggle."

## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE EFFECT OF IT ALL.

Dolly's tender solicitude was sweet to Lucien as the dew to thirsty flowers. Through the long hours she sat beside him, bathing his head, sometimes singing to him, always caressing his pale face and saying loving words which made his dark eyes brighten. He told her that he was glad it happened because it gave her to him for the whole of that autumn Sunday, and showed him how much she loved him.

In the kitchen Mrs. Felder, who felt somewhat annoyed that Dolly had assumed the whole responsibility of nursing her lover, was full of dismal forebodings.

"I knowed from the furst, as far as I was concerned, ther wa'n't no luck in a match made to where ther was death in the house. Now comes this ter'ble fight an' such a spilin' of blood. Dolly'll be a widder inside'n a year, and by vileness, too —by vileness."

"Mother," exclaimed Jo, sternly, "I hope ye don't go sayin' such silly things to the young folks an' tryin' to skeer the wits outen em!"

"Well, as fer's I'm concerned I hain't s——"

"Then don't. They'll hav trouble enough without you gittin' it ready fer 'em."

Throughout Feldersburg and the regions thereabout, Lucien's fight with the Klimmers and his marvelous prowess were the theme of every little gathering. Everybody defended him and censured his cowardly assailants. "Of course, Dolly Felder'll marry him," was the verdict of the mothers and daughters who discussed her conduct in putting her arm around Lucien when she got into the buggy. Having settled that, they discussed Tommy Watson and wondered how he would take it. Where Dolly would live after she got married engaged their speculative fancy, and how Lucien would like Mrs. Felder for a mother-in-law. They wondered where Lucien came from, and guessed

that he must be a prize-fighter or "something." The old women revived stories about the time when Jo was courting his wife, and how they first met, and the other "sparks" they had, and the Feldersburgers were very much obliged to Lucien for having given them such an excellent day's gossip, but the fact that he had never confessed anything about himself was viewed with suspicion. One game suggested at the tea table of a friend that it was highly probable that Lucien was already married. This idea found favor, and that night at the meeting house, after the preaching was over, it was widely circulated by those who spoke "in perfect confidence and knew it would never be repeated," that Lucien had already been married twice, and one of his wives was living out in "Calaforny." It was the established habit of Feldersburg to locate unknown and missing people in "Calaforny." However, this did not reduce his popularity, and might almost be passed over as a trifling youthful indiscretion, so much were the women in love with the gallant way in which he had borne himself.

On Monday morning Lucien came down to breakfast wearing a little silly skull cap which almost covered the bandages on his wounded head. He was pale and weak, but determined to attend to his school duties, though Dolly and her father besought him to stay at home.

"No, I will teach to-day in some sort of a way. I won't have the Klimmers think they laid me up. Besides," he continued, "it will be easier to face the children than if I put it off for a week."

He was right. But few children came to the school that day, as it was generally expected that the schoolmaster would be unable to teach; that few stared and at odd times giggled, but the task of meeting his scholars was over. Though faint and dizzy, he struggled through the day and staggered home at night thoroughly exhausted. Again Dolly's kind hands soothed him, and as he lay on the lounge looking into her sweet face he loved her with a passionate devotion and trusted her as few world-worn men ever trusted. Dolly read in his eyes the story of his faith in her, and her gentle heart leaped with joy, and at last she was content—he not only loved her, but believed in her.

It was in this spirit that she now spoke to him, and with children's innocence and joy she planned the home where they would live together, and the vista of the future was one long, love scene with flowers, and pictures, and music and caresses. She opened her heart, and what Lucien read there was a purity he scarce could

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fathom. All her reserve was abandoned; her whole wealth of love was bestowed on Lucien; there was nothing kept back, and the whole-heartedness of Dolly's love swept away Lucien's constraint, and he was a boy again, sanguine, loving and full of bright hopes and dazzling pictures of the happiness in store for him with Dolly by his side.

One night Jo came into the room where Lucien and Dolly sat by the window. Twilight was growing into darkness, and in this lover's gloaming plans were being made for the beautiful days to come. Jo's entrance did not disturb them. Dolly had no secrets from her father, and she often wondered why Lucien was so silent when either of her parents was present.

"On, Pappie!" she exclaimed, "we've just been planning how we will live after we are married; and we are going to keep a horse and buggy, and I will go out with Lucien every evening to see his patients, and I will sit in the buggy till he comes out from seeing them, and we'll have just the loveliest time every day."

"Where is all this goin' to locate itself?" inquired Jo kindly, as he lifted Dolly from her chair and seated her in his lap.

"We haven't settled on a place yet, but Lucien says it will have to be a village first, till we get started, and then we'll go to a city and he will get a rich practice and be professor in a college, and keep a carriage, and I can be with him nearly all the time, and then," continued Dolly in eager excitement, "when we get lots of money well quit practicing medicine and travel all over Europe and everywhere, and Lucien and I will be together all the time."

"And where will poor old Pappie be?" inquired Jo, huskily.

"Did it think it was forgotten?" crooned Dolly, as a mother would to her baby, while she wound her arms lovingly around her father's neck and kissed his cheek. "Why, you and Mammy are to live with us, of course—after we get started—and when I am away from Lucien I'll be with you."

"Why not git started right here in Feldersburg?" exclaimed Jo. Without waiting for an answer, with rapid utterance he followed up his suggestion with an eager intensity which betrayed the anxiety he felt. "Here's good a place's any! There hain't no doctor 'tharin' 'leven miles to the east an' none 'tharin' fifteen miles to the west, an' none south t' th' lake, an' only one t' Belkton, an' he's not much, an' he's got more'n he kin do workin' night 'n' day. Settle right here's Feldersburg, an' it'll

cost ye nuthin' fer a horse an' all that, an' I'll build a house fer ye up in the village; an' I'll think I'm gittin' off ter'ble well to hav Dolly handy by where I kin look at her once 'n a while, an' all I got is hern; an' thar hain't no use takin' her 'way off an' leavin' me, n' mother t' sit n' look at one 'nuther an' cry an' wonder wher' Dolly is, and take on like that night after night I don't see no use in it—an' she the only one I got an' she's ter'ble near to me!" cried Jo, appealing in tears to Lucien, who had drawn back and was sitting rigidly upright by the window.

"Mr. Felder, I am not marrying Dolly because I want to be supported, and I do not propose to do it before I can support her.

"Oh, Lucien! Please don't talk to Pappie like that. He knows what you mean and how proud you are. Poor old Pappie," she cried, giving her father an affectionate hug, "he'll miss me and he wants me to stay near by. I wonder you and I never thought of it."

Jumping from her father's knee she put her arm coaxingly around Lucien's neck, and serenely settling herself in his lap she began to plead for the scheme her father had proposed.

"We won't touch a cent of your money over in New York. I don't want you to do that. But there is no reason why we shouldn't stay in Feldersburg for a few years, till we get rich enough to live in a city. You know a lot of people here and can make more money than you could anywhere else, and Pappie and Mammy would be so happy!"

Lucien was stubborn and unreasonable for awhile. He felt that it would be a fatal mistake, but could give no reason. His pride could find no insult in Jo's plaintive appeals for Dolly to stay near him, yet the idea oppressed him and the joyous future was darkened by the thought. One thing, however, was certainly tempting. If he settled in Feldersburg it meant that as soon as he graduated he could marry Dolly and begin the practice of medicine without fear of hunger or grinding poverty. If he refused, it might be a year, or two or three, before he dare marry. This at last decided him to accept Jo's offer, and though he was still unaccountably depressed he consented, and Jo was delighted beyond measure.

Dolly's joy was unbounded. She would not be parted from her lover only for a few months, and even then it would not mean separation from her dear old father. Lucien alone felt that this apparent kindness of Fate meant misery for them all, but he could not bear to think of leaving Dolly, and he strove to be

happy in the thought of having her for his own so soon, and forgot his tears."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

GOOD BY, SWEETHEART.

The days flew swiftly by, and no one was surprised to see Dolly and Lucien so devoted to each other. It had been accepted by all Fellersburg that they were lovers, and all the world "loves a lover." The Watsons had been assiduously striving to induce Lucien to visit them again, but in vain. Anonymous letters had been written to Lucien warning him against Dolly and insinuating that she was not only a coquette, but something worse. Every one of these letters gave Lucien the most acute agony. He did not believe them, and yet he could not forget that such things had been said. Tommy Watson, too, smiled at him in the most patronizing and offensive way, and leered at Dolly until the poor little girl blushed and looked confused. Still Lucien doubted only when he was alone, and forgot his ranking fears when Dolly's honest blue eyes shone on him. He heard whispers of the reckless doings of his sweetheart, and swore to himself that he was not moved save in anger against those who took pains to let him know that in other days Dolly had been "awfully wild."

Dolly, too, was the recipient of many nameless letters, which he at once showed to Lucien and laughed when he got angry at the insinuations against his character. Their love was too sincere to be disturbed, and when Christmas came and Lucien's trunk was packed and he prepared to leave for college, no cloud could be seen on the bright horizon of their future.

Again and again she kissed him good by. Amidst smiles and tears she caressed his face with her soft, white hands and begged him not to forget her.

"Every day, remember! Not two or three times a week, but every single, solitary day, and a long letter at that!" she said to him the night before he was to leave, "and if ever you miss a day I'll get Pappie to take me to Toronto to see if you are dead or have found some one you like better than me."

"Why, he won't be able to study nuthin' if he's writin' to you all the time," exclaimed Jo, whose ideas of letter-writing were founded on the half day it took him to prepare an ordinary epistle.

"Every night," continued Dolly, unheeding her father's interruption, "you must sit down just before you go to bed, and write me everything that happened through the day. If you meet any nice girls, tell me all about them, and if you

like them better than me—No, don't! Don't ever say anything about any woman, it'll make me jealous, and I know you won't flirt, will you, dear?"

Lucien answered Dolly's pleading glance by promising never, never to speak to any female who did not strictly belong to the civil service of his boarding house.

She helped him to put the last few trifles in his trunk, and just as he was closing it she gave him a photograph of herself.

"Pappie took me to town so I could get it." Throwing her arms around his neck, her eyes streaming with tears, she sobbed: "I don't want you to forget me. I know you'll see lots of people so much better and handsomer than me that I'm almost afraid to let you go, for fear your eyes will be opened, and you will see what a soft, silly country girl I am, and wish you hadn't asked me to marry you."

Lucien promised, and as he comforted her with assurances that no woman could be as beautiful in his eyes as his curly-haired, laughing, bright-faced Dolly, he was saddened by the thought that months must pass before he would again embrace his darling.

In the morning, while Jo was seated in the little wagon which was to convey Lucien to the depot, Dolly still clung to her lover, and with scores of kisses bade him farewell.

She watched the wagon as it went down the hill, and as it turned the corner in the village she waved her handkerchief and then ran to her room to cry. Her mother went to comfort her, and after lifting her up and bathing her face, remarked:

"Iain't no use agoin' on like this! Looshe'll be back an' marry ye—I feel it in my bones, as far as I'm consarned, but it's the wuss luck fer ye if he does than if 'e don't, for ye'll be a widder inside of a year, annyhow, an'—"

Dolly jumped from the bed like a little fury.

"Stop! I tell you, stop! Don't ever talk to me like that again! Pappie told you not to once, for I heard him, and I won't have it! Oh, I want him to come back! I'm going, too! I'm going to Toronto! I know some girls there, and I'm going to see them, and then I'll be with him!" and, exhausted by her tears, she again threw herself on the bed.

"Of course, mebbe signs'll fail," suggested her mother coaxingly, "and as far as I'm consarned I hope they will. Of course Looshe wrote ye a letter, and in yer mind ye'd accepted him afore you did up to Janet Blagg's, so that'll make a difference. Of course, mebbe it's only when people makes up their minds to a wake

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"Mother!" shouted Dolly, thoroughly aroused, her swollen, tear-stained face blazing with wrath. "please go away and let me cry myself out. If you don't, I'll go crazy and jump in the river!"

"Why, of course I'll go if ye don't want me, but as for I'm con—"

"Then go now," blazed Dolly, "before I go clean out of my mind."

"Wy, wot a ter' bly spitfire yer gittin' to be," snorted Mrs. Felder, as she bounced out of the room, and Dolly buried her face in the pillows for another good cry. But the door was no sooner closed than Mrs. F. reopened it and inquired:

"Kin I bring ye a cup of tea or suthin'—a biled egg 'ud be strengthenin', ur mebbe a—"

Dolly was out of bed by this time and had shoved the door shut. With a resolute tug she piled her trunk against the door and rolled the bed against the trunk.

Mrs. Felder heard these preparations for a siege and went down stairs muttering, in a heart-broken, shrill whisper:

"Ter' bly thankless girl Dolly's gittin' to be."

The days that followed shall not be described. The home life of the Felders was changed. Nothing was discussed but Dolly's wedding trousseau and the many virtues and talents of Lucien. Dolly had forbidden any other topic. Jo, often silent and sad, had yielded. On Sunday afternoons young men often drove up to Jo's gate and tied their horses, but Dolly would have nothing to say to them, and they went away disconsolate. Dolly was always in the little post office when the mail came in, and seizing her precious letters, ran away as happy as a lark. She used to read little snatches of them to her father, but the words of love she read and re-read and read over again when she was alone. She kissed the handwriting and went to sleep at night with Lucien's letter in her hand, wondering what he was really doing and thinking when he wrote. Not a letter did she send which did not inquire if he liked her best, and yet she never doubted him in the least.

With Lucien the days passed quickly. He had lost half a session and had to tax his strength to the utmost in order to catch up with his studies. He wrote to Dolly every night, and in his trunk a package of letters tied with blue ribbon, grew larger and larger day by day. He was contented and hopeful, and when ex

amination day came he won the gold medal, and started for Feldersburg a "doctor" and a proud and happy man.

During his journey he thought of nothing but his reunion with Dolly. The loving letters he had received and the hours of jealous agony he had passed came back to him and he wondered if he would find his sweetheart unchanged. His fiercely jealous nature was stirred by the thought that maybe Dolly had been flirting with Tommy Watson, and the train seemed to creep along as he thought of the comfort it would be to him to look again into those eyes of honest blue and read the story of her pure love as of yore.

When he got into Humstir's stage he absolutely longed to hear the old man talk of the Feldersburg people, and was almost disgusted with himself to feel a thrill of pleasure when old Humstir began:

"So youn Dolly Feller air goin' to get married, air ye? At least, so I've heered."

The stage contained no other passengers, and Lucien, burning to talk to some one of Dolly, admitted that such was the case.

"Who'd a thought it a year ago when ye rid down 'ith me after the school. I reckoned then Dolly'd tuck Tommy Watson as she'd bin a runnin' along of him so long, but no one kin tell what girls'll do."

Lucien felt his heart sicken at the thought of Tommy, but he laughed and said he guessed Tommy could stand the disappointment all right.

"I reckon mebbe he kin; like enough he kin. I seed them together tother day a drivin' down from town as jolly as a pair of tunkers."

"Indeed," exclaimed Lucien, feebly, his heart in his throat.

"Yes, she rid up to town 'ith me, but she kem back 'ith Tommy; guess mebbe she missed the stage, as it was party blamed late when they cum drivin' into my hotel, and asked for the parcels I brought down in the stage fer her."

Lucien felt faint and sick, but said he was glad she didn't have to stay all night in the city.

Old Humstir looked as innocent as a dove, but he had determined to give the haughty Lucien all he could bear.

"She ast me what time I left, and when she wasn't on hand I guessed mebbe she was goin' home 'ith Tommy, as I seed her a runnin' round 'ith him, ur l'd uv waited a few minutes fer her."

Lucien was almost choked with jealous rage. Dolly had done this when they were to be married in a few days.

"Of course, the' wa'n't no harm in it, as they cum along by my place afore nine

o'clock, though old Jo was ter'ble put out when he come to meet his gal and she wa'n't there."

This last speech put Lucien on his guard, and he laughed and guessed Jo was pretty well used to Dolly's freaks. At the same time he would have liked to have strangled the sneering old reprobate, and his fingers itched to grasp the neck of the hilarious Tommy.

Jo met him at Belkton, and Lucien's dark face and heavy frown oppressed him. The old feeling of distrust and fear came over him, and as he glanced furtively at his stern and silent companion Jo wished that Dolly had made a different choice. As they passed Drunken Archie's Jo remarked:

"Janet Blaig is living with us now. Our hired girl left, and so we took Janet to help along, seein' as Dolly's goin' to leave us."

As Lucien thought of the death-bed scene and the ride home with Jo and Dolly, he softened, but still he was in an inward fury.

"I'm glad to hear it," he answered. "The memory of her trouble and your kindness will make her faithful to you."

"Mebbe," said Jo, thoughtfully, "but seems to me that gratitude and good faith and that sort o' thing has to be born in people or it won't matter how much you do for them, they'll never say 'thank ye.'"

Lucien's face darkened again. He thought Jo was driving at him, and he resented the idea of perpetually serving out a debt of gratitude. As they passed, a fine new house attracted his attention.

"Who has been building?" he inquired.

"Well, I put it up," answered Jo, simply. "I thought mebbe it'd come handy for you an' Dolly, an' she's got it furnished and all ready to move into, but she was holdin' it as a surprise agin your gittin' home, an' mebbe she won't thank me fer tellin'."

Lucien was silent; Jo thought he was sulky and went on.

"She was up to the city last Friday and got the finishin' touches fer it, though she had ter'ble bad luck, and missed the stage, and ned to come back with one of the Watsons, but she felt so cut up about it that I couldn't scold her, an' I hope you won't nuther," blurted out Jo, who shrewdly enough guessed Lucien's weakness, and felt sure that Humstir had been talking nasty on the way up.

Jo's kindness and honest faith that he, Lucien Melroy Strange, would return and marry Dolly was so pure and sincere, and the kind thoughtfulness of the good old man so impressed the jealous lover that he melted completely.

"You are too good to me," he penitent-

ly exclaimed. "I wonder that you have such faith in me. I don't deserve it."

Then when Dolly rushed out to meet him, and hugged him, and laughed and cried in turns, he could not but forget his suspicions, and looked in her face and laughed and kissed her, and said he was so happy that he would like some quiet place to go and have a good cry.

They sat together and talked late into the night, and Dolly told him that she was afraid to relate an adventure she had, but "Pappie" had told her to tell Lucien all about it.

"Do you know, when I was in the city on Friday I missed the stage and had to ride home with Tommy Watson, and he made it just as late as he could before he would bring me home. I was scared almost to death, but I was afraid not to come home, because Pappie would be frightened. I would not have missed the stage," she added lovingly, as her plump arm encircled Lucien's neck, and she pulled his face down to hers, "only I was so anxious to bring a lot of ornaments for the house with me so that they would be in place when you got home, and I forgot about the nasty old stage. You don't blame me, do you?"

Lucien confessed his jealousy, and told her how Humstir had harped on it, and she was almost as angry as he had been. Then they both dropped the subject, and talked of their plans for the future. In the ecstasy of love the ride with Tommy Watson was forgotten—though he often recalled the incident, and never without a pang of jealousy.

Nothing we do or say is ever entirely forgotten, if it stirs a heart to either love, jealousy or hate.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### DISCUSSING THE WEDDING AND OTHER AFFAIRS.

At breakfast next morning, it was evident that Mrs. Felder had something on her mind, but her astonishment at the conduct of Dolly made her hold her tongue for a few moments. It had been the custom for Jo and Mrs. Felder to occupy the seats at the head and foot of the table, while Lucien and Dolly, sitting on opposite sides, faced each other. This morning Dolly, without explanation or apology, moved her plate and chair beside Lucien's and sat near him, as serenely loving as if she had already possessed him for years. Jo glanced at the young couple, and in his eye was something as near akin to jealousy as a noble nature can feel; his Dolly was slipping away from him. Mrs. Felder afterwards expressed to Lucien the hope that he did

er that you have 't deserve it." he'd out to meet and laughed and not but forgot his in her face and said he was like some quiet good cry. He talked late into bed him that she adventure she had, her to tell Lucien

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## VII.

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not think Dolly "had acted bold in gettin' next to him so terrible unques- tionin' like." Lucien felt at once flattered and flushed, but Dolly seemed un- aware that there was anyone present who had the slightest right to be critical. The meal was not half over before Mrs. Felder found it impossible to remain burdened by the surging ideas which had accumulated since she rose from her bed at dawn.

"As fer's I'm consarned," she began, with an eloquent wave of her knife, "I think it's high time we was a settlin' on what we're gunto do to the weddin', 'sein's it's no futher off'n Thursday, an' her it 'tis Tuesday and nothin' done, septin' the cakes made an' the folks ast 'em—"

Dolly glanced at Lucien out of the corner of her eyes, and found him intently crushing some crumbs with his fork. Jo shoved his chair back and stretched himself, and seemed resigned to a considera- tion of what he knew was about to come. "As fer's I'm consarned," she repeated, "I don't want no hizzle, I don't!"

Lucien looked up enquiringly.

"I want things to go off without'n a hitch. I bin fatten the turkeys all winter, and they're all right, as far's the're consarned. I was a thinkin' of havin' Jo git a box of baker's bread, but I decided it wouldn't do, fer the neighbors'd say how we bought all our stuff, and hed a bigger layout than hed ever bin hereabouts, 'cause we could afford to buy everythin', so I baked up a batch and thank mercy I hed purty good luck, too, so I hain't fretted about that. An' we've got ten different kinds of cake, an' we're gunto use Dolly's new dishes to set 'em off, an' I kin say that ther hain't no chinsey nur crockery nur knives an' forks an' glassware 'round here that kin go alongside of what Dolly's gunto hav, so I hain't nervis about that as fur as that's consarned. As' as fer as Dolly's clothes is consarned I guess them's all right, hain't they Dolly? Ther hain't bin no sick clothes at a weddin' in Feldersburg afore, nur won't be agin fer a spell, will ther Dolly?"

"I must show them to you, Lucien," exclaimed Dolly, jumping up from the table.

"Only the hats an'dresses, Dolly," cried Mrs. Felder; "not the—the other things, it wouldn't be purty. But sit down, Dolly, I want t' understand what's gunto be did! Who's to stand up with ye?"

"No one, Mammy, we can stand up alone, can't we, Lucien?"

He was standing by his chair; Dolly was so temptingly close to him that he put his arm around her and said he

guessed they would be able to hold one another up without any help.

Mrs. Felder was not to be discouraged. "Then there's the tower an' the unfair an' the house-warmin'. Whatter ye gunto do about them? I want to know, 'cause the neighbors keep askin' me an' I don't want to keep on sayin' that ye haven't settled on it yit, an' a lookin' foolish as if I didn't know what my own girl was gunto do. Taint right, an' makes me look flat an' foolish, as if I was put upon an' wa'n't talked with 'bout nothin'!"

Lucien saw that his future mother-in-law was working herself into a state of mind, and thought it was best to settle the matter at once. Turning to Dolly he inquired what she thought would be proper.

She told him that she had decided on nothing, and would be satisfied with whatever suited him.

"Well, then, about the tower?" questioned Mrs. Felder.

Lucien was thinking uneasily about the depleted state of his finances when Dolly murmured, "I don't want any tour; all I want is to be with you in our own little home!"

He turned quickly, and looking into those soft pansy eyes, glowing with love, he pressed her hand and said he, too, wanted nothing but rest and Dolly.

"Then you won't go," cried Mrs. Felder, dejectedly. "Everybody does 'round here, even if it hain't more'n twenty miles, an' mebbe if you don't you'll git shiv-ered."

"Oh, no, Mammy, there isn't any one who would be so mean as that to us—nice girls never get used that way."

"But Tommy Watson and Malon Klimmer, mebbe, might do it and get up a gang of roughs," persisted the mother.

"I'm not afraid," cried Dolly, "are you?"

"Not a bit," answered Lucien nervously, who knew what a charivari meant, and knew he would almost die of rage if he had to endure such a scene.

"An' then of course you can't have an in-fair, nuther, 'cause there hain't no bridegroom's folks to git it up!"

"What is an 'in-fair,' Dolly?" inquired Lucien, who felt hurt at the reference to the absence of "bridegroom's folks."

"Oh, it's nothing, except a sort of a dinner like the one at the wedding, only it is given the newly married couple after they return from their trip by the father of the bridegroom. I am awfully glad there can't be one; it would be such an awful bore."

"But of course you'll have a house-warmin'!" insisted Mrs. Felder, who was rapidly becoming convinced that Lucien

was unacquainted with the ways of first-class society.

"That's a party in our new house," explained Dolly. "I don't care about it unless you think it would do you good and get you acquainted with the people!"

"Of course," echoed her mother, excitedly, "as fer I'm consarned it'd be a waste of money to hev sich a fine place as we've fitted up if ye didn't ask no one in to see it. Of course you'll hev a house-warmin' seen's yer not gunto hev a tower, nor an infair, nor nuthin': it'd be scandalous without a house-warmin' nor nuthin'. Comin' after the terble bad beginnin' ye hed, gettin' engaged to a wake, or the same's one, where ther' was a dead corpse in the house, it'd be jest like defyin' death to go into a new house 'ithout doin' of some kind er other, an' even then!"

"Now mother!" interrupted Jo, who had been a patient listener, "don't begin' that! If they don't want to be bothered with a lot of folks, why let them alone."

"I haint botherin' 'em," retorted Mrs. Felder angrily, "but I don't want Dolly talked about as gettin' married and hevin' no sort of doin' nor nuthin'. I'd be ashamed to look people in the face an' them knowin' that we kin afford it, an' no other chick her child neether!"

Lucien still stood with his arm around Dolly's waist. He saw that Mrs. Felder was bent on having a house-warming, and that there would be trouble if it was opposed. "What do you say, Dolly? We might as well have it if you think it would be pleasant."

"Don't ask her; she'll say jest as you do! She don't want to do nuthin' but jest hang onto you, she don't. She wouldn't get a dress ner nuthin' 'ithout sayin' I think Looshen'd like that, and she wouldn't hev the loveliest weddin' dress I ever seed jest cause she said you'd think it wa'n't good taste."

"Why, Mammy!" cried the blushing Dolly, "We'll have the house-warming, if you want it, the night we are married, and you can ask all Felderburg if you like."

So it was settled, and Mrs. Felder's spirit was soothed.

Lucien and Dolly visited their future home, where Janet Blagg was installed as housekeeper. Everything was superlatively new, but in excellent taste, and even Lucien could not help joining the enthusiastic Dolly in admiring the household appliances which had been stored in pantry and closet. Standing by the window of the front room, which had been furnished as his office, they talked of the happy days to come. Of course they would get rich, and Pappie had antici-

pated the event in buying a little office safe in which valuables were to be kept. She explained that he was township treasurer, and had long talked of getting a safe where his papers would be secure, so he had put it there, and both he and Lucien could use it.

Lucien guessed he would have little need of it for years to come, but Dolly was sure he would make lots of money, for people couldn't help liking him and sending for him when they were sick.

Just behind the office, and opening into it, was a bedroom, which Dolly explained was for him.

It was through that same window, six months later, he looked from the outside and saw a sight which made his blood course through his veins like liquid fire and maddened his brain with that fearful passion which murderers feel, when in a blind whirlwind of rage, they sate their vengeance in blood.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE WEDDING AND THE HOUSE WARMING.

The rain was splashing against the window panes when Lucien awoke on the morning of his wedding day. Owing to the weather Mrs. Felder was in a "frame of mind." The omens were too much for her, and she wept. Dolly sought to comfort her in vain.

"I was set on hevin' it on Wednesday instead of Thursday, and if my advice hed bin taken, you wouldn't hev hed yer hull life spiled by bein' married on a rainy day," moaned the mother.

"Pshaw, mother!" Jo exclaimed, in vexation, "there haint nuthin' in sich notions."

"Hain't ther?" snorted Mrs. Felder. "Mebbe you've watched it as I hev, and mebbe you hain't! When I was helpin' Maria Helen Smith through her trouble, an' a ter'ble time she hed, too, poor critter, a-cryin' all the time fer months, an' her husband abusin' of her, I told her, an' Susan Mary, her sister, heard me say it; fer she was in the room to the time; I said, when Maria Helen was a sobbin' an' wonderin' why she hed sich times mor'n any other wimmen, an' such set-backs, sez I: 'Maria Helen, I knowed it'd be jest as it is, fer I was to yer weddin' an' I never seed a wuss day in all the year, a rainin' an' a blowin' terble. You mind the day, don't ye, Jo, when Hill's barn was burnt the same night an' I told ye at the time as Maria Helen was makin' a terble bad start, an' you sed—'

"Just what I say now, mother," interrupted Jo, sharply, "that it is all nonsense, an' I reckon it hain't much encourage-

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ment for the young folks here to hear ye takin' sich things."

Rau, however, won't keep people away from a wedding, and Jo's house was crowded. Parson Meeker performed the ceremony, and when he got Lucien and the blushing Dolly standing before him, took occasion to expand his lecture on marital duties and responsibilities into a discourse of nearly an hour. Lucien grew weary and showed his anxiety for the old parson to wind up, but without effect. Sly shafts were aimed at Satan, through hints at "infidelity," and the guests exchanged glances and whispered, "That's intended for Joel."

Extended observations on church-going were followed by mature and, Lucien thought, altogether too minute directions concerning the bringing up of a family. Finally they were pronounced man and wife and everybody knelt in prayer. Parson Meeker was then enabled to pray for Jo without disguise. He hoped that the affliction of losing his daughter would soften the father's heart and make him accessible to Grace and Truth. He pointed out the evil to the community arising out of a life such as Jo's. He indicated with most unmelodious unctuous the responsibility assumed by Jo in setting a bad example to the settlement by never attending church. Twenty minutes of prayer were then given to the newly-married couple, and it perhaps might have lasted longer had not a baby set up a lusty scream. When the company arose from their knees Jo looked angry, but Parson Meeker sighed, looked piously down his nose, and wore the air of a man who had performed a painful duty.

There was a rush to kiss the bride, and Lucien was inwardly furious as he saw everybody present, male and female, saluting his wife. The wedding dinner proved a grand success, and Mrs. Felder was in her element, but it was not a sociable party, and Lucien awed everybody by his haughty self-possession, and the customary wedding jokes were unusually feeble. Almost everybody took occasion to observe that they didn't believe in signs and omens, and several cases were cited to prove that it was possible for happy lives to follow rainy wedding days. These cheering remarks enlivened the proceedings considerably, and Lucien and Dolly, sitting together, smiled hopefully at each other, as if the idea of unhappiness entering their doorway was too absurd to be entertained.

Parson Meeker, who had just passed his plate for a third consignment of roast turkey, and was awaiting its return, re-

marked in a sepulchral voice, that it wasn't the wedding day, but the Judgment Day which decided the happiness of the human race. He expressed the hope that at the last great day "those present at this festiaval board would not be thrust away from the marriage supper of the Lamb," though his melancholy tone and lugubrious face indicated a fear that the majority were anything but safe. His plate having returned well filled with good-things, he resumed his dinner with the additional appetite afforded by a sense of another painful duty performed.

Jo's bubbling spring of good nature was frozen up by these remarks, and no one dare venture any further jokes, Parson Meeker having intimated during the recess between turkey and pie, that the last joker would ultimately have to give an account of every idle word and "frivolyous hour."

After dinner the company dispersed, excepting those who had come from a distance. When Parson Meeker climbed into his mud-spattered buggy, he urged Jo to take the sacred truths he had heard unto himself, that they might bring forth fruit a hundred fold. As the old minister expressed these sentiments, he was stowing away under his buggy seat a ham and a section of the wedding cake, and he did not see the curious and almost contemptuous look with which Jo was regarding him.

Lucien and Dolly were standing on the veranda when Jo came in. The minister was jogging past, and Jo with more than usual excitement, exclaimed:

"Poor misguided critter, he'd enjoy a funeral better'n a weddin', if the eatin' was as good."

At night the new house in the village was crowded by the young folks from miles around. Dolly had never before looked so lovely, and as she received her guests Lucien was astonished at her tact and grace. He thought bitterly of the wealth and social position which belonged to him in his native town; what a sensation in society his lovely Dolly would make! No one could compare with her in beauty, and she moved and spoke as if she had been rocked in society's daintiest cradle.

Putting these thoughts away from him Lucien strove to be agreeable. He shook hands with everybody and laughed and joked until he actually grew merry as a boy. Dolly praised him and once she took him to one side, kissed him rapturously and told him he was acting so jolly that every body was in love with him. Thus encouraged, he redoubled his efforts. He danced with 'Rene Watson and Jennie Hill and swung his partners in the quadrilles and cotillions

with such enthusiasm and hilarity that the fun became infectious. Dolly, too, was everywhere, dancing with everyone, the belle of the evening and the soul of good-humor. Lucien saw with pride that everyone loved her and acknowledged her supremacy, even though envy and spite sometimes darted their arrows at her.

There was only one little cloud and its name was Tommy Watson. This precious youth insisted on dancing over-much with Dolly, and to prevent remarks she yielded a point in his favor. As the evening grew towards morning Dolly discovered that Tommy and one of his friends were becoming hilariously tipsy. When he danced with her he was altogether too demonstrative and she reproved him very sharply. Lucien was insanely jealous and his good humor was rapidly giving way. Tommy, instead of repenting, grew still more jolly after another visit to the bottle in his buggy, and Dolly, fearing that Lucien would discover the cause of the trouble and eject him, decided to tell 'Rene and urge her to take her brother home. In pursuance of this plan she invited Tommy to go into the kitchen after calling to 'Rene to follow. Lucien saw his wife and Tommy leaving the room together and almost immediately followed them, though the tardy 'Rene did not. In the kitchen Lucien discovered Tommy in the act of trying to kiss Dolly, who was resisting his tipsy advances, and sneaking to him in an earnest whisper, which Tommy answered with a laugh:

"You've got to kiss me, and then after to-night I'll give you up, and your high-strung doctor can have you all to himself."

"You'll have everybody out here, you simpleton," retorted Dolly, and looking toward the door she discovered Lucien, his face almost black with rage and his eyes gleaming ominously, yet his voice studiously low and steady, as he spoke:

"Mr. Watson, be kind enough to respect the hospitality you are receiving."

"It ain't your hospitality, it's her's" muttered Tommy, sulkily.

"Please Lucien dear don't mind what he says," cried Dolly coaxingly. "he's been drinking, and I was trying to persuade him to go home and not make an exhibition of himself!"

At this point 'Rene appeared, and Dolly exclaimed almost angrily, "Why didn't you come when I called you, and keep Tommy from making a fool of himself!"

'Rene saw the frown on Lucien's face, and grasped the situation in a moment. Her eyes sparkled maliciously as she answered.

"Why, Dolly, I didn't hear you call me, and I only came out now to see what

had become of you and Tommy, as I noticed you leaving the room together, and I was afraid it would be remarked."

Dolly blushed crimson, but drawing herself up proudly she exclaimed:

"Your brother is drunk, and acting in such a manner that I cannot permit him to remain in my house, and I will be obliged if you will get him to go home!"

Lucien handed Tommy his hat, opened the back door, and told him he couldn't go too quickly.

'Rene's eyes blazed as she called to Tommy, "Bring the buggy to the door, and Flora and I will go with you!" Then turning to Dolly she hissed, so that Lucien should hear: "You didn't used to be so particular!"

Dolly and Lucien returned to their guests, and excused themselves for their absence by saying that the Watsons were leaving.

In half an hour everyone had left them excepting Jo and Mrs. Feller. While Dolly and her mother were helping Janet "straighten things up," Jo talked to Lucien, and was surprised to find his son-in-law so silent and gloomy.

At last Jo and his wife said good-night, and Dolly, turning into the little parlor, put her arms around Lucien's neck, and looking straight into his eyes, began:

"Oh, Lucien, you do not think badly of me because that tipsy fool tried to kiss me? I was so afraid you would get angry with him and make a scene, and that would have been awful on our wedding night, and would have made people talk. That was the reason I took him away from the room where you were, and I told 'Rene what was the matter, and motioned for her to come with us, though she tried to make you jealous by denying it."

Lucien stood for a moment moodily gazing into those deep, blue, tearful eyes, and then stooping down kissed her forehead.

"I believe you, Dolly: I was angry, I confess, and jealous—mostly on account of what I heard him say!"

"I have been in agony lest you might find a false meaning in his words: but once for all I swear to you, Lucien darling, that I never loved Tommy Watson, nor ever permitted him to kiss me. And 'Rene hates me because you married me instead of her, and is trying to poison your mind against me. I'm sure she and Tommy wrote those nasty letters, and I will never speak to them again."

Lucien could not quickly shake himself free from the horrible suspicion which had seized him, nor could he look into Dolly's honest eyes and not be convinced of her truth. Dolly's arms dropped from

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scene, and that  
and I live a hundred years all alone.  
Please, dear sweetheart, always believe  
that I would die for you and be glad."

" You do not believe me in your heart!"  
she cried, piteously, her eyes streaming  
with tears.

Suddenly encircling her with his arms,  
he almost crushed her in his passionate  
embrace.

" I do believe you, Dolly, my love,"  
he whispered in broken voice. " I do  
believe you, my wife, my darling, my  
life; 'tis I who am to blame with my  
accursed suspicions and frantic jealousy.  
But I love you so that I cannot bear to  
think that there is a niche in your  
heart that is not mine. I can't bear even  
the slightest fancy that you ever had a  
thought of love before you loved me."

" I didn't, Lucien. I never loved any-  
one except Pappie and Mammy till I met  
you. I was only a little girl, and I never  
knew there was such a thing as the love I  
feel for you, until the night I kissed you  
and ran away because it frightened me.  
And, Lucien, my husband," — Dolly's  
hands clasped his face and drew it down  
to hers — " I can never, never love any-  
body but you even if you should leave me  
and I live a hundred years all alone.  
Please, dear sweetheart, always believe  
that I would die for you and be glad."

The doubts fled. The tears were kissed  
away. The first drops of rain had fallen.  
The storm was coming.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE STORM BREAKS.

Happy days! They are not many.  
They are uneventful. When we remember  
them we say they were happy, but we  
can hardly tell what happened.

Such were the days which came to Dolly  
and Lucien. Days when they sat and  
talked together; sometimes read one to the  
other; sometimes silent but finding  
company in each other's presence. They  
went for long drives and in the beginning  
joked and laughed about the patients  
which never came. All at once Dr.  
Strange began to be busy and his office  
slate was filled with calls. With the good  
luck which befalls some young doctors,  
his patients recovered and his wonderful  
cures were counted by the score. This  
made him happier still, and often Dolly  
went with him and sat in the buggy while  
he made his visits. She was proud of  
him and the whole wealth of her love was  
heaped at his feet. He loved her and  
his old suspicions seldom returned; ex-  
cept when driving alone. Then his tire-  
less mind would recall some of the tattle  
of the past and suggest fearful pictures

of Dolly's perfidy. So strong and vivid  
was his jealous imagination that having  
once started on a train of thought, he  
knew no bounds. Pictures rose before  
him of Dolly flirting with others in his  
absence, and then he saw himself—the  
outraged husband—bursting in upon her  
and striking her dead in his fiery wrath.  
At this point he would find himself actually  
trembling with excitement, and, laughing at his imaginative folly he would  
shake off the phantom and finish his  
journey studying over the proper remedies  
for some case of fever. His jealousies  
and gruesome fancies, he knew, had  
no foundation, but still they passed  
again and again through his mind. Re-  
tentionary memories, supplied by observant  
eyes, always play such pranks, and many  
a sharp pang they bring to the heart.  
Other pictures and memories follow  
quickly and crowd such terrors out, but  
woe to the man or woman who nurses and  
pets the jealous goblins which troop past  
in the great procession of memory, when  
every idea we have stored up fits by in  
grand review. In these lonesome journeys  
Lucien made speeches in congress,  
lectured to the students of a college, was a  
famous literary man, an actor—the star  
of the drama—a preacher—anything,  
everything. He could imagine himself  
the hero of a daringfeat, or the criminal  
on the scaffold; there was no limit to the  
pictures which floated before his mind's eye.  
But no picture made him sweat in  
agony and cry out and lash his horse, but  
the conception of Dolly loving another.  
He laughed at himself and spurned his  
fancy, and swore that he was a fool to let  
such ideas pass through his mind, but still the pictures came, and often he  
could not free himself from the thralldom  
of his vicious fancy until he saw Dolly at  
the gate, meeting him with loving smile.

They had been married nearly six  
months when Dr. Strange, in the course  
of his practice, was called to attend an old  
man who had been brutally beaten. The  
old man's daughter, a half silly and  
thoroughly disreputable girl, nursed him,  
but seemed careless whether her father  
lived or died. When the old man had  
sufficiently recovered, the shameful story  
of his injuries was told to the young doctor  
and a magistrate who had been sum-  
moned to hear the complaint. In short,  
the old man returning late one night from  
his work found Tommy Watson and  
Malon Klimmer together with his daughter,  
holding a drunken orgie in his house. He  
remonstrated, and was answered with  
abuse; he ordered them to leave and had  
been assaulted and beaten; he desired the  
magistrate to issue a warrant for their  
arrest. The magistrate, however, urg'd

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only on account

the old man to keep quiet and settle the trouble out of court, and offered to act as intermediary. Lucien, filled with utter loathing for the two ruffians, advised that the law should take its course, but consented to keep quiet if the old man was given ample damages for the injuries he had received. The sum fixed upon by the old man was large, but the magistrate assured him it would be paid by the young men rather than have the affair exposed, and he at once set out to inform the culprits of their danger, promising that next day would see the money paid.

Strange told his wife nothing about the shameful episode, contenting himself by saying that an incident had come under his observation that day which convinced him that Tommy Watson and Malon Klimmer were cowardly scoundrels of the deepest dye, and he hoped that she would never recognize either of them again, no matter where she met them.

Dolly was surprised and curious, but asked no questions. She feared that he had had another attack of jealousy, and sought by her loving attention to his wants to make him forget his suspicions.

A long night ride was before him when supper was over, and as he stood in the grassy little yard, the rein of his horse over his arm, Dolly came out to kiss him good-bye. The sun was setting, and the red beams shining through the tinted trees crowned Dolly's bright curly hair with a halo of autumn glory. How fair and sweet she looked! Never before, Lucien thought as he fondly kissed her, had she looked so lovely. Even after he was in the saddle he was loth to leave her, and sat talking and stroking her little white hand, which was half buried in the horse's mane.

"You won't be awfully late, will you, Lucien?" she inquired.

"Yes, it may be morning before I am home. I cannot possibly be back before one or two o'clock, so don't sit up for me, girlie."

"Indeed I will; I can't sleep when you are away, I am so afraid something will happen you. Do please come back just as quickly as ever you can."

Janet was standing at the gate, holding it open for the master that she served with a loving loyalty that never forgot the death of her little Crippie.

Bending down, Lucien again kissed his wife good-bye, his horse trotted through the gate, and Lucien told Janet to see that Dolly went to bed in good time.

"Oh, but she won't," Janet answered, with a knowing shake of her head. "She'll sit up, if yer gone for a week."

"Yes, I will! So just think of me

shaking with fear and watching for you to come back," cried Dolly, warningly.

As he galloped up the hill by the white farm house, he thought of the many happy days he had spent there wooing Dolly, and, turning in his saddle, he could see the flatter of her handkerchief waving adieu.

Jo stood at the gate and stopped him. "I was just goin' up to your place to put some money in the safe; it belongs to the township, and I hate to keep it by me."

"Here is the key," answered Lucien. "Dolly has another, so you can keep this one."

Bidding his father-in-law good-night, Lucien galloped away, and Jo strode down the hill toward the village. In the store he lingered a few minutes, and seeing the curious little key in his hand, some of the loungers inquired what it was. Learnedly and at some length Jo explained, and wound up by remarking that he was just about to put some money in the safe.

When Tommy Watson, who had been trying to borrow two hundred dollars from the storekeeper, heard this, his face flushed and his knees trembled. Here was a chance, thought he, to get his share of the money to hush up the scrape into which he and Malon Klimmer had gotten.

"Yes, I keep one and Dolly keeps t'other," Jo remarked, with just a faint touch of pride in the possession of the only fire and burglar-proof safe in the township. "I haint much fer lockin' doors and that sort of thing t'home, but when I'm holding other people's money I like to feel it's where no one kin git it without'n my order."

"Who's sick?" enquired the storekeeper. "I seed the docto' ridin' off just now."

"He didn't say; he never does," answered Jo, "but I guess it's authin' serious, fer he sed he wouldn't be back afore mornin'."

The desperate Tommy turned his face away, lest the guilty plan which flashed into his mind could be read in his face. His father was having one of his "harness tug" spells and could not be approached, nobody would lend him any money, the disgraceful exposure threatened him, and if his misdeed became known Jenny Hill who had lately learned to look upon him with favor and her hundred acres of land would be lost to him. Yes, he would steal that money; no one would suspect him. He went home trembling in every limb, but determined to have it. The magistrate told him that Malon Klimmer had promised to have his share ready, and he had gone to him and implored him

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to raise enough for them both, but with a  
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all he could do to get enough for himself,  
and he didn't care much if it did get into  
court.

Tommy remembered the little bunch  
of keys which Dolly took from a hook in  
her bedroom, behind the doctor's office,  
the night of the house-warming, when  
she showed some inquisitive guests the  
interior of the safe. It would be easy to  
slip in and get them, rob the safe, and be  
gone. At midnight he dropped from his  
window, and skulking through the fields  
came to the fence behind the doctor's  
yard. Slipping through the gate he  
found the kitchen door locked, but the  
window beside it was open, and reaching  
in he turned the key and was in the  
house. His bare feet made no sound, and  
the hall door opened noiselessly. The  
door leading to the bedroom was ajar; a  
lamp turned low was burning on the  
dresser. Peering through, Tommy saw  
Dolly lying half-dressed on the bed, sound  
asleep; the bunch of keys was on the  
hook! How loudly his heart was beating;  
he feared she could hear it. No; she is  
sleeping soundly, her arm under her curly  
head and her breathing soft and reg-  
ular.

Outside, the wind is rising and the  
heavens are darkened by the storm-clouds  
floating through the heavy air, almost  
touching the tree tops on the hill. The  
ears of the trembling wretch hear the dis-  
tant rumble of thunder and he starts back  
at the faint flash of lightning gleams  
through the window.

He opens the door and glides into the  
room—his hand is almost on the keys; a  
gust of wind blows through the doors he  
has left open behind him ready for flight;  
the curls on Dolly's forehead flutter as  
the breeze passes over her face; a door  
slams shut, she starts up and is face to face  
with Tommy Watson!

Her blood seems like ice; with a moan  
and shiver she clasps her hands and gazes  
at him with wide-open, sleep-bewildered  
eyes. Suddenly she springs from the bed  
and stands before him like an accusing  
angel, her disheveled dress and tangled  
curls lending a tragic effect to her pale  
face and flashing eyes.

Tommy, frozen with fear, stands motion-  
less, his hand reaching towards the bunch  
of keys, his tongue cleaving to the roof of  
his mouth.

Dolly's eyes flashed over him, she saw  
the uplifted hand, the keys and the quak-  
ing terror of the pallid face.

"Thief!" she hissed, "I know what  
you are here for; go!"

His hands felt nerveless by his side, and  
he dropped upon his knees and implored

her to forgive him. He was desperate;  
ruin stared him in the face. He clutched  
her dress and begged that she would lend  
him the money.

His abject, cowardly misery, relieved  
her from fear of him, but a wave of loathing  
and disgust came over her.

"Leave here this instant, you dirty  
little sneak, or the doctor will be home,  
and then you will get what you deserve."

"Oh, will he," sneered Tommy, who  
was on his feet again, recovering his courage,  
"and who will suffer most, you or I?"

Dolly's face turned deadly pale as she  
thought of Lucien's return, and his fright-  
ful jealousy. "Go! for God's sake go!"  
she cried.

"Then lend me the money. If you  
don't I'll stay till he comes, and that'll  
settle you," sneered Tommy defiantly, as  
he perceived his vantage ground.

Neither of them saw the face, hideous  
with fury, peering through the front win-  
dow at that moment. Lucien, returning  
early, thought of nothing on his home-  
ward ride but Dolly, and how lovingly  
she bade him good-bye. Then his jealous  
fears came back to him, and his fancy  
pictured frightful things, which had been  
dismissed with a forced laugh and a reso-  
lution to think of something else. As he  
drew near home his heart beat joyfully as  
he imagined the sleepy but lovely Dolly  
waiting for him. He saw the light shin-  
ing dimly from the window, and resolved  
to surprise her. Turning his horse onto  
the grassy roadside, no sound was made.  
He flung the reins over the gate post and  
stepped up to the window to see how his  
sweet Dolly was putting in the time  
while she waited for him. The half-opened  
blind revealed the dimly-lighted office  
and his and Dolly's room behind.

A long, low gasp, choking, almost suffoc-  
ating him, sounded in his throat like a  
death-rattle. His brain swam dizzy,  
and his eyes scorched the lids  
which dropped over them to hide  
the scene within. He could hear nothing  
of what was being said. Even had the  
sound reached his ears his swirling brain  
could not have understood it.

"Go! Oh, please go," begged the poor  
little girl, her brain throbbing with fear  
that her husband would return and find  
her with Tommy.

"I won't go till I get the money," re-  
torted Tommy.

"Then I'll call Janet!" cried Dolly,  
passionately. "I'll never let you touch  
a cent in that safe, and if you don't go  
this instant I'll tell the doctor all about  
this, and he will see that you are attended  
to."

Tommy feared he had gone too far, and  
begged her to borrow the money for him

before noon. He swore he would never persecute her again. Just before he fled from her room he seized both her hands, and kissing them, exclaimed :

" If you do this for me I'll worship you for ever."

Darting through the hall and out of the kitchen door and through the back gate, Tommy fled homeward. As he left Dolly, the face at the window disappeared. Lucien had often pictured in his idle and jealous fancy some such scene as he had just witnessed; then he had beheld himself red-handed with the blood of those who had betrayed him. Now he was face to face with the reality, and he could scarce breathe or move. Dolly false to him! Yes! there could be no doubt. Yet he did not want to kill her. He staggered to the gate and leaned heavily against the palings. He had been mistaken. She did not love him; she loved Tommy! In his paralysis of grief he did not blame her. No one could love him! He would let her free from her bondage! His horse stretching his neck over the fence touched his hand, and Lucien reached out and stroked the sympathetic brute-face. Suddenly drawing his notebook from his pocket, he wrote in the darkness in straggling characters :

I have left you. I saw you with your lover, and I will trouble you no more. I would rather my heart break than yours. To you and to the world I am dead. Adieu.

Your dishonored

LUCIEN.

Softly lifting the window he dropped the note into his office, and jumping on his horse rode away. The sound of the horse's hoof-beats aroused Dolly, and thinking that her husband was returning she sprang up, opened the door and called softly, "Lucien! Lucien!"

There was no answer.

The lightning was flashing from hill to hill. The thunder, with one incessant roar, drowned every other sound. The gates of heaven were opened, and the rain dashed down through the blackness of the night in torrents.

Frightened and weeping Dolly called Janet to come down and sit with her "till Lucien came home."

Far away, galloping madly over hill and plain, unheeding the storm without, consumed by the storm within, clinging dizzily to his saddle, swaying in deadly faintness from side to side, Lucien rode away from Dolly, love, hope, and life.

The way grew rough, the tall pines overhung the road, the storm was raging wildly; he heard nothing but a soft voice calling "Lucien! Lucien."

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### THE MURDER.

Tired with waiting and watching, and the excitement and terror of the night, Dolly slept. Janet was putting Lucien's office "to rights." The morning sun streamed brightly in the windows as if there had never been a storm, and shone on a ragged note-book leaf on the floor. Janet picked it up and read it. She couldn't understand, but fearing that it meant more than she could comprehend, she took it to Dolly. Awakened from her slumber, Dolly sprang up with the question :

"Has Lucien come?"

"No, dearie, but I found this on the floor, under the front winder."

Dolly seized it, read it, passed her hand over her forehead, read it again, leaped from the bed, one hand crushing the note, the other pressed against her heart; then, with an agonizing, heart-piercing shriek, she fell back insensible.

Janet tried in vain to revive her. In despair she ran to the door, and calling to a little boy, sent him after Jo and Mrs. Felder.

Before help came Janet opened the little white hand which convulsively clutched the note she had found on the floor, and hurriedly secreted the little torn sheet which had so frightened her mistress. No other eyes should see it, thought Janet, as she carefully laid it away.

Jo Felder was not long coming. Without hat or coat he ran wildly through the village, and sprang up the steps of his daughter's house and into the room in which Dolly lay, white and motionless as a corpse.

"What's the matter of her?" Jo screamed, in frantic terror, as he lifted his darling in his arms, and swung her to and fro, as when a baby he had killed her to sleep.

"Oh, my God! is she dead?" he shrieked, and his voice was like the wild, despairing cry of a mother when she feels the death chill creeping over her babe.

"She fainted, and I can't bring her to," explained Janet, between her sobs.

"What uv ye done to her? Oh, my God, my God! Whatuv ye done to her?" he moaned, as he ran out into the yard with his white-robbed girl, and sat on the kitchen steps bathing her face and calling to her to speak to him.

Mrs. Felder had come, and running to Lucien's cabinet, seized a bottle of harts horn, which she held beneath Dolly's nose; a spoonful of brandy was forced between the colorless lips, and then, with

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Dolly opened her eyes.

Jo sobbed aloud with joy, then frightened  
by the wild, hopeless eyes which  
looked up at him, he strove to laugh.

"Yer all right now, haint ye, Dolly? Th'er haint nuthin' the matter of you, is ther, baby?"

"Where's Lucien? Where's Lucien? I want him," Dolly gasped. "Oh, where is he?"

"Where is the dang'd feller?" cried Jo, looking round with a desperate effort to appear unconcerned. "He haint never round when he's wanted, is he, Dolly? Guess m'bbe he haint got back yit."

"He's gone—he'll never come back! Oh, Lucien, Lucien, come back to me!" sobbed Dolly.

"Lay 'er down, Jo," said Mrs. Feller, authoritatively; "leave 'er to me, and she'll be all right in a minnit."

Jo placed his darling on the bed and then sought to learn from Janet the cause of the trouble, but the close-mouthed Scotchwoman had no explanation to offer except that Dolly woke up in a "spell," and fainted dead away.

Finding from the slate where Doctor Strange had gone the night before, he dispatched a messenger for him.

All day long Dolly lay as if in a swoon. Sometimes she would open her eyes and ask, "Has he come?" and Jo, with a smile that choked him, replied, "Not yit; he's ter'ble busy, but I'm 'spectin' him every minnit."

But Dolly was not comforted, and a sense of some terrible disaster began to oppress poor Jo. The messenger came back and reported that Doctor Strange left his patient a little after ten the night before, and no trace of him since could be found.

Jo was perplexed. What could have happened him?

"Has he come?" whispered Dolly.

"Not yit, girlie. Like enough some body was sick, and saw him go by, and called him in. He's all right, Lucien is; never fear about him."

"He's gone! he's gone! I'll never see him again!" she wailed, and Jo had to leave her and go out in the kitchen and weep.

Just about sundown a man on horseback dashed up to the gate and inquired for Doctor Strange.

Jo met him at the door and told him the doctor was away, but they were expecting him back every minute.

"Peter Klimmer's bin murdered?" exclaimed the man.

"What?" shouted Jo, incredulously.

"Yes, murdered and robbed. They jest found the body in his bedroom, stark

and stiff, welterin' in blood, and they wanted the doctor to come, though they know it haint no good."

Jo staggered back exclaiming, "Peter's murdered and—" He said no more, but leaning against the doorway he coupled, in an indefinite way, the disappearance of his son-in-law with the murder. He wondered at first if Lucien had also been murdered, and he gas ed for breath as he thought of the effect of such news on Dolly.

Leaving word for the doctor to go to Klimmer's as soon as possible, the man rode away to Belkton to notify the coroner. Strict orders were given by the Belkton doctor that nothing should be disturbed in the room where Peter lay until the inquest had been held. The neighbors who kept watch in the house of death through the long and awful night whispered together, and told gruesome tales of murders and hangings, and speculated on the chances of Peter's murderer being brought to justice. The family had gone to bed, and Sadie's hysterical sobbing could be heard by the watchers, coupled with the murmur of her mother's voice in vain attempts to soothe. The creaking of the bed in which Malon was rolling ceaselessly from side to side told how little he slept. The dog howled under his dead master's window, and as the night wore away the watchers were scarce able to conceal their superstitious fears. The morning found them pale and haggard, and when at 9 o'clock the coroner came and entered the room with his jury to view the body they peeped snidely over the shoulders of others, and shivering with horror, hurried away.

The scene, as the coroner rolled up the curtain and pushed open the blinds to admit the light, was horrible. The hairy, muscular body, uncovered except by the shreds of a shirt, lay upon the uncarpeted floor in a great pool of thickened blood. The upturned face, upon which the blood had clotted like a mask, was no longer human: it was fiendish. From brow to cheek opened a gaping wound, and the eye-ball hanging down upon the blood-soaked whispers, still glared defiance. Through the nose and the upper jaw, slit wide open by another blow of the bloody axe, which lay in the corner, protruded the swollen tongue and the glistening teeth. The beard torn from one side of the face, the great hairy chest smeared with gluey brown blotsches of blood; the right arm almost severed from the trunk; the legs lissome, muscle-knotted, rigidly extended in the death agony; the upward bent hand of the severed arm, with wide opened fingers as if it had been parted from the body while grop-

ing in the dark; the red footprints on the floor; the white-sheeted bed in the corner, with here and there a blood spot; the wide open chest and scattered papers; the coarse garments thrown on the floor as Peter had undressed; all these, revealed by the bright sunlight streaming through the window and over the blood-spattered walls, blended into a picture of murderous horror never to be forgotten.

The inquest revealed little of importance. The evening before the murder, Peter, as was his custom on leaving his room, locked the door, and left the house. When he returned none of the family knew. He was in the habit of going away without saying when he would be back, and his supposed absence had excited no comment. His room was down stairs and all the other members of the family slept upstairs. The storm during the night had blown one of the shutters off the window and the hired girl in passing had noticed that a pane of glass was broken, and pushing aside the curtain had looked in, to see if the rain had been blown into the room; she saw the body and ran screaming to the others; the door was burst open and the bloody deed revealed. Dr. Strange and the coroner had been sent for and nothing had been touched in the room.

Malon testified that he had seen and talked with his father during the afternoon of the day before the murder; it was in the barn, and they were talking of things on the farm and whether they had better sell their wheat or hold it; he did not know whether his father had any enemies or not; he had heard the girls say that his father kept an axe in his room but had never seen it, as he never went into the room; no, he wouldn't know the axe; he had not seen it and didn't want to, and as he spoke his face paled and beads of sweat stood out on his swarthy face.

The room was again examined and the jury decided that the window had been broken in order to undo the fastening on the maims; the bloody footprints were measured, and one of the jurymen pointed out that they had evidently been made by a fine boot, not by the large coarse shoes generally worn by farmers except on Sundays and holidays. The chest had been pried open and ransacked, and it was supposed robbed. Malon said he didn't know whether his father kept much money there or not, but guessed he always had some.

A verdict that Peter Klimmer had been murdered by some person or persons unknown, was the result of the inquest, and the matter of finding the murderer was put into the hands of a county constable,

who was spurred on by the large rewards offered by Malon and the county authorities.

The fact that Doctor Strange had not answered the call to come and see the body the night before, was mentioned, and the jurors reckoned that he might have forgiven the assault made on him by Peter "seein' as he was dead." In this way Lucien's troubles with the Klimmers was recalled, and when it was rumored that Doctor Strange had disappeared, all sorts of stories began to circulate, and before the end of the week people were shaking their heads and saying that it looked "ter'ble suspicious t'say the least." The women pitied Dolly and wondered what would become of her, and yet found excuse for censuring her for marrying an unknown, suspicious character, who came "nobody know'd wher from or what he'd bin doin'."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE ACCUSATION.

In the new house, with the pretty furniture, and the blue sign with "Dr. Strange, physician and surgeon," in gilt letters, on the door, there was the stillness of death. Dolly lay in the little room behind the office pale, tearless, moaning incessantly and sometimes starting up at the sound of a footstep, crying "Has he come?" and then falling wearily back on her pillow.

Jo sat holding her hand in her big, trembling palm, often patting her cheek and pushing the curls back from her forehead. She never answered his caresses nor seemed to understand what was going on around her. Stunned and half unconscious, she lay motionless for hours. The doctor who had been brought down from the city said she had suffered a severe nervous shock of some kind, and that he could do but little for her. He urged Jo to rouse her from the torpor into which she had fallen, but every effort was useless.

Jo had telegraphed all over, seeking Lucien; no trace of him had been found. In an agony of tear and uncertainty the poor old father had bent down his grey head till it rested on the pillow beside the tangled curls of his beloved Dolly, and burst into tears. Her hand touched his cheek and she whispered, "Don't cry Pappie! He's gone and I'm going too! I want to die!"

"Oh, Dolly, Dolly," sobbed Jo, his great frame shaken by his anguish, "don't talk like that! Tell me where he's gone and I'll go and fetch him."

"I don't know; he's dead; I want to die!" Her eyes closed, and even Jo's tremulous entreaties could not arouse her.

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While Jo sat watching in the silent  
darkened room, the door was pushed  
noiselessly open, and Janet whispered,  
"There's a man out here that sez he  
wants to see Mrs. Strange, and he won't  
go 'way."

"Not till I see her," interrupted a  
coarse voice, and Janet was pushed aside  
by a burly and disreputable looking man  
who walked into the bedroom with the  
swagger and insolence of one who not  
only had a right there, but proposed to  
make it unpleasant for any one who dis-  
puted it.

"Her father, I s'pose?" enquired the  
intruder, as he dropped into a chair be-  
side the bed and turned his meaty ex-  
pressionless eyes toward Jo.

"Yes, I'm her father, an' I want to  
know what you mean crowdin' into a sick  
room like this," cried Jo, with anger.

The sound of a strange voice roused  
Dolly, and raising herself up she de-  
manded eagerly, "Has he come?"

"No missus, he haint come, but I've  
come after 'im."

"He's gone! he'll never come back!"  
moaned Dolly, sinking back on her pil-  
low.

"Gone, is he? Never come back, hey?  
I guess mebbe he will, I do! When Detective Sinker goes after a man, the feller comes back generly speakin' as a  
rule." As he spoke the officer leaned  
forward, pointed his dirty forefinger and  
leered knowingly at Dolly.

Jo, stunned and speechless, stood gazing  
at the detective, who continued in the  
same threatening tone:

"There's a couple of fellers searchin'  
the house now, and if my laddy-buck is  
here they'll hev 'im afore five minutes,  
an' if he haint here I'll hev him afore five  
days, betcher life on that! so y' might  
just as well tell me all ye know 'bout the  
murder an' how he come t'kill the ole  
man."

With closed eyes and dazed under-  
standing Dolly had heard what the officer  
said, but comprehended nothing. At the  
word "murder" she raised her head and  
looked with terror-stricken eyes at the  
intruder.

"Is he murdered?" she gasped.

"No he haint! Lucien haint! It's Peter  
Klimmer he's talkin' about!" cried Jo,  
throwing his arm around Dolly and  
patting her cheek. Turning fiercely  
to the officer, his face white and  
drawn with fear, rage: "If it haint  
no part uv yer dooty to kill sick women  
ye'll shet yer mouth an' get out'n here.  
This poor girl is half out'n her mind now,  
'cause her husband's missin' an' of you  
keep on she'll be dead afore night."

"Who's dead, Pappie? Is Lucien

dead? Who killed him?" inquired  
Dolly, faintly.

"Peter Klimmer's dead. Lucien's all  
right," said Jo, soothingly, in Dolly's  
ear, at the same time glaring threateningly  
at Detective Sinker.

At this moment Janet came in, and  
with a parting caress Jo laid Dolly down,  
and motioning Sinker to precede him, left  
the room.

"Say, look a-here, mister man, I don't  
want no sick racket played on me,"  
sneered the detective, as Jo fairly pushed  
him out of Dolly's apartment.

"Search it then, blast ye, afore ye  
leave!" snorted Jo, and Sinker turned  
back and looked under the bed and in the  
wardrobe before he was satisfied. Two  
burly men stood in the hall and reported  
that no signs of the doctor could be found  
anywhere in the house or barn, and Sinker  
told them to go up to Felder's and search  
there.

"An' welcome!" ejaculated Jo.

When they had left Dolly's room, Jo  
sternly demanded Sinker's right to search  
either Dolly's house or his own.

"Jest this right," swaggered the  
detective, officially. "that Doctor Strange  
is suspected of murderin' an' robbin'  
Peter Klimmer, an' I'm after him hot-  
foot."

"What reason could Dr. Strange have  
fer killin' or robbin' anybody?"

"Well, ye know, he an' Peter hed a  
fight, an' they hated each other like cat  
an' dog, an' I s'pose the young feller was  
hard up an' guessed he'd settle old scores  
an' make a pile at one lick."

"An' that's all ye've got to go on, is  
it?" sternly demanded the old man.

"Well, hain't he missin' an' haint that  
all enuff?" sniffed Sinker, as he took an  
extensive chew of tobacco.

"No, it haint. He wa'n't in need of  
money, as everybody knows, fer he could  
hev every cent I've got by askin' fer it."

"I've hed enuff of this talk. Jest git  
me the keys of that ere safe an' mebbe  
I'll come across some evidence as'll pint in  
a diff'rent direction."

On his tip-toes Jo stepped into Dolly's  
room and got her keys. They  
hadn't been touched since the night when  
Tommy Watson reached for them and was  
discovered by Dolly. The detective  
watched every movement, and when Jo  
returned, eagerly seized the little key held  
out to him.

In the little safe he found nearly six  
thousand dollars marked "Township  
Funds," but not a scrap of writing con-  
cerning Lucien.

"It haint likely as he'd leave that  
much money a-lyin' in his safe and rus-

away with what he could steal from Peter Klimmer!" cried Jo, sternly.

"Mebbe he didn't know it was there?" retorted Sinker.

"Yes, he did; he gave me the key he had the very night of the murder so I could put it in, an' I kin prove it, too, by a dozen people!"

"They wot made 'im run away?" inquired Sinker, uneasily.

"Who sez he's run away? He's gone, but we can't tell why or where. Sutnin' may hav' happened him; I can't tell. Mebbe he's bin killed himself?"

The detective was silenced. That big pile of money in the safe puzzled him. "I'll put a seal on that lock," he said, "till I can find what was stole from Klimmer's chest, and then I'll know if it's all right," he remarked, as he put a daub of sealing wax over the key hole and stamped it with his ring.

"I kin prove who gimme that money!" exclaimed Jo. "The tax collector did, an' he remembers the bills, too, fer he took 'em out'n the Bank of Montreal, an' spoke of 'em all bein' the same kind when we was countin' 'em."

Detective Sinker, after asking hundreds of questions, went away but half satisfied and Jo resumed his tearful vigil by Dolly's bed. Her youth and strength asserted themselves, and she slowly began to notice her surroundings. Her hand would slip into Jo's big palm and her eyes turn lovingly toward his haggard face. Often she turned away from him and wept as she remembered the little ragged note in which Lucien said farewell. Life seemed a burden, and willingly she would have laid it down, but the old face which watched day and night by her bedside was so eager to see her look up, so wracked with pain when she wept, so watchful when he thought she slept, that she knew it must be her duty, as well as her fate, to live on and comfort the closing days of her father's life. This decided her case, and the something-to-live-for stimulated the feeble flame until it burned more brightly day by day.

Jo's joy was boundless. When Dolly smiled he hugged her with delight, and once when she tried to comfort him by one of her old-time pleasantries, he roared with laughter, and springing from his chair, danced half a dozen steps of the Highland fling, which Dolly knew he reserved for the annual or biennial occasion when he was feeling his best.

Love is a great doctor. It is indeed the all-healing physician, even when love forsaken is the disease. The great, pure love of Jo Felder soothed the troubled heart of Dolly, and when in her soul she consented to live, it was to bless and console the

white-haired old man whose love beamed upon her like the sun upon the flowers.

Jo would let no one see her. Even his wife was not permitted to talk to her. Mrs. Felder was insulted, but Jo was stubborn.

"An' I can't say nuthin' to 'er. Can't talk to my own disgraced girl!"

"Ther' ye go! That's the way ye'd give it to her! I don't want her to know nuthin' till she's strong enough to stand it. Disgraced, hev? Et ye ever say such a thing to her I'll choke ye! D'ya hear me?" roared Jo, in his furious anger.

Mrs. Felder cowered before the ~~big~~ <sup>big</sup> exhibition of Jo's temper and subordination.

"Pappie," whispered Dolly, one day, "what became of—of—that letter?"

"What letter, Dolly?"

"The one Lucien left when he went away."

"I never seed any letter, Dolly. I don't know what ye mean. Don't talk of it, baby," cried Jo, softly, patting her hands and trying to seem unconcerned.

"What became of it?" exclaimed Dolly, a feverish flush mounting into her pale cheeks. "Didn't Janet tell you?"

"No, Janet said nuthin' about a letter ner nuthin', only that you woks up in a spell and fainted dead away."

"And you don't know *why* he went away?" Dolly asked, sadly.

At this moment Janet hustled into the room, and Dolly inquired what became of the letter.

"What letter?" responded Janet, stolidly.

"The one you gave me the morning after—after he went away," answered Dolly, her voice choking.

"I put it away, please ma'm. I was afear'd someone'd see it as hadn't ought to."

Dolly's eyes looked thankfully at the homely Janet as she answered, "That was right; bring it to me now."

While Janet was away, Dolly told the story of the night of Lucien's disappearance, of Tommy Watson's visit, and her conviction that Lucien had seen him while he was in her room. The letter was brought, and Jo, with wide-open eyes, scanned the uneven lines which said farewell.

"I see it all now!" he exclaimed, "he hed no more to do with that murder than you or I."

"What murder, Pappie?" gasped Dolly.

Jo saw he had committed himself, and with fear and trembling explained that Peter Klimmer had been killed and that Lucien was suspected.

"He didn't do it, Pappie! I'm as sure

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as I'm alive he didn't. Oh, my God ! my God ! what have I brought to him but misery ! Oh, Lucien, Lucien, come back to me ! " Dolly's grief was terrible in its vehemence. While she went and moaned she thought of the wrong his sister did him and she reproached herself for the folly which had brought this calamity about.

" I don't believe he did it, girlie. Don't take on so, we'll find him an' make it all right yet," cried Jo.

Janet stood by the door, a witness of the scene, and when Jo turned impatiently and asked her why she waited she answered :

" I know he'll come back an' make it all right, an' I'm sure it'd be wrong to let anyone know about that letter, 'cause they'll just suspect poor Dolly fer nuthin'."

" Yer right, Janet, it'd be a mistake to say anything about it, wouldn't it, Dolly?"

" No, it wouldn't. Give the people that suspect him a reason for his absence. Don't injure him by screening me," she sobbed.

" But please, Dolly, I've thought it out for the doctor, an' I know it'd only make things worse'n worse. If he comes back he kin explain it fer himself, an' if he don't, there's no use you sayin' anything about it an' gittin' talked about."

Janet said this with the authority of one whose loyalty to Doctor Strange could not be disputed, and her last significant reference reddened Dolly's pale cheeks and made her clasp her little white hands in a sudden burst of agony.

" Oh, Pappie ! Pappie ! what is right to do ? " she sobbed, burying her face in her father's lap.

" Say nuthin' about it, Dolly, till it can do him some good. It'd only make people think he was desperat, and like'nuff they'd believe it all the more likely he killed old Peter."

So it came about that the story of Tommy Watson's thievish visit and its awful consequences was never told. Jo counselled Dolly never to tell her mother, and Janet's tongue could have been drawn from her mouth and still her stern, Scotch, stubborn silence would have remained unbroken.

### CHAPTER XXXII.

#### "THE YOUNG WIDDER UP TO FELDER'S."

Nearly two weeks had passed since the murder. No word had been heard of Lucien. Dolly had never been seen by the villagers since the fateful night, and they commended her modesty in hiding her shame, for it had been as good as settled that Lucien was Peter Klimmer's murderer. For poor old Jo there was

nothing but sympathy. When he entered the store, every voice was silenced, and a rude effort was made by every lounging to make Jo feel that they had not been talking about the murder and his son-in-law's flight. These signs of a popular belief in Lucien's guilt at first made Jo awkward and embarrassed, and it became currently reported that Jo had "just the same as owned up that his son-in-law was the man that did it." Soon this feeling of shame was banished by the sense of Lucien's innocence, and Jo felt it his duty to let his views be known.

Going into the store one day, his ear caught the drift of a discussion on the merits of the finding of the coroner's jury.

" I've heered," said one, " that the footprints in the room was just the size of Dr. Strange's boot, an' if he'd bin anybody, savin' Jo Felder's son-in-law, the clue'd bin foller'd closer'n 't was."

Jo bridled when he heard this, and tapping the speaker on the shoulder, remarked :

" You kin come over an' measure it fer yerself. There's bin a dozen constables an' detectives ther' a'ready, an' none on 'em found the doctor's boots thin an inch of the size of the foot-mark in Peter Klimmer's room."

The thoughtless wight crimsoned with shame when he found that Jo had heard his words, but Jo was determined to have it out with him.

" There's a heap of senseless talk about who killed Peter Klimmer, an' I want you to understand that I don't believe it was Lucien Strange as did it. He is gone an' can't speak fer himself, an' I don't know any more'n you do why he went away so sudden, but I do know that he wa'n't the kind of a man to kill anybody for revenge or fer money. He may hav bin murdered himself fer all we know, and I think it's a danged shame to put his wife an' me an' mother to blush fer him when none on ye has a better right to suspicion him any more 'n to suspicion Seth Hill over ther, or any of the rest on ye, 'ceptin' that he's gone an' hain't come back."

" That's so," responded a half-dozen voices.

" He couldn't 'a' done it, fer he had as soft a heart as any man in this room, an' it wa'n't fer money, 'cause he left nigh six thousand dollars of my money in the safe that he knowed was ther', an' he knowed I'd a gin him any amount he wanted if he'd afer't. I say ther' was suthin' happened him, an' when the truth comes out, as it will some time, ye'll find that Lucien had no more hand in it then we had."

At this moment the door opened and

the burly form of Detective Sinker was seen bending over the greasy counter.

"Hev ye seen Jo Felder 'round here?" he inquired of the storekeeper.

"Yes, I'm here. What d'ye want?" said Jo, turning round, with loud voice but sinking heart.

Without further parley Sinker drew from his pocket a packet wrapped in brown paper, and unfolded it on the counter.

The loungers crowded around to see the contents of the parcel, and as Jo turned them over, one by one, they watched his blanched face in silence.

"That's like Dolly's ring," he muttered, in a tremulous tone, "an' that's his watch, sign as I kin remember, an' them's doctor's instruments, like he hed. Where did ye find 'em?" he inquired, huskily, pushing away the blackened and greasy objects before him.

"Take a look at that poor critter out there," said the detective pointing to the door, while he stood guard over the trinkets on the counter.

A lean and jaded horse, tied by a rope to the axle of a buggy, stood by the door, and, with the ready recognition which farmers all have for horses, a half dozen exclaimed, "That's the doctor's horse!" and Jo, with trembling hands, stroked the poor brute, muttering, "Yes, that's Dixie, the horse I gived him, poor critter."

The detective stood in the doorway viewing Jo's distressful recognition with a self-satisfied swagger. "I guess the young feller's done for all right enuff," he exclaimed, putting the parcel in his pocket; "there hain't nothin' more left uv 'im 'cept a few bones that I've got up town waitin' for identerfication."

With a fearful thought of how all this would affect Dolly, Jo leaned against the wheel of the buggy and wept. Even the officious and hardened detective was touched by his misery, and suggested that he had better come in and sit down while he heard the rest of the story.

Jo staggered into the store, and sitting on a box, his face buried in his hands and the tears trickling between his fingers, listened to the self-satisfied and pompous recital of the detective.

"Yesterday a feller came into town from Dickson's pine limit, thirty miles west ahere, an' reported that he'd found the remains of some feller that hed bin struck 'th lightnin' and burned to a crisp, an' the coroner an' me went out to look at the remains."

Pausing to observe the effect on his audience, the swaggering detective took a fresh chew of tobacco, and continued:

"We found the bones of a man an' this

ring an' watch an' things on him, but ther wa'n't a stitch of clothin' ner authin' but I rubbed the black off'n the watch an' saw 'L. S.' an' in a minit guess'd it was the doctor. So I took the ring an' stuff and hunted through the woods an' found a bridle hangin' on a tree where his horse had pulled it off, an' party soon struck the saddle hangin' by a stirrup to a tree where it'd got caught, an' then I found the horse browsin' along of some colts, an' I fetched it all here fer identerfication. He 'peared to bev bin sittin' under a tree by a fire when the lightnin' struck him an' the timber, and burned him up."

"Wher'd ye say it was?" questioned one of the loungers.

"Up'n Dickson's limit, thirty mile from here," answered Sinker, curtly, as he turned his meaty eyes on the questioner.

"Thet wa'n't in the direction the Doctor was, the night of the murder; he was last ahere, down tother side the m'ash," suggested the man.

"Well, mebbe ye know more about'n it than I do, an' then, agin, mebbe you don't; all I know is them's his things, an' that's his horse, an' I guess where one was 'tather was too," sneered Sinker.

"I haint disputin' that," apologised the man. "I was only a wonderin' how he got there!"

"I haint sayin' how he got there, ner why, only that ther he was an' ther I found him," Sinker retorted, severely, while he buttoned up his coat and prepared to go. "Come on, mister!" he said, touching Jo on the shoulder. "I want to see if the doctor's missus 'll identerify them things!"

Jo sprang up, and, seizing the detective by the arm, begged him to refrain from further troubling Dolly, but in vain. "I must hear wot she's got t'say afore I go back; that's wot I was sent here fer."

"Then don't tell her about how ye found them; just show her the watch an' ring, and say nothin' 'bout her husband bein' burned; it'd kill her, I know 'twill."

Sinker consented, and though Dolly begged him to tell her where he got them, he refused to explain.

Jo did not leave her that night till she was asleep, and he had told her nothing except that he was afraid that Lucien had been injured by a stroke of lightning. He promised to go and see him next morning, and after giving her a sleeping draught he waited till the heavy eyelids drooped over her tear-stained cheeks, and then he hitched up his team and started for the town to arrange for the burial of the charred remains of Dolly's husband,

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hoping to return before any thoughtless voice would break the news to his darling girl.

Mrs. Felder, however, decided that Dolly could not know of her widowhood too soon. With the dawn she was by Dolly's bedside, waiting for her to awake. As the garrulous mother sat watching Dolly's fair face she began to weep, and her sobs awoke the unquiet sleeper.

"What's the matter, mammy?" cried Dolly. "Anything about Lucien?"

"I knew it! I told ye so the very night you assepted 'im 't jest the same as a wake that you'd be a widder inside a year from the weddin', and here it is just as I sed."

Mrs. Felder was noisy and often silly, but she loved Dolly. As she watched the blue eyes staring helplessly out from the little pale face, her motherly heart yearned for the poor grief-stricken child, and throwing her arms about her daughter, she burst forth in loud lamentations.

Dolly tore her mother's arms from about her neck, and pushing back the weeping woman, scanned her face, while she asked:

"Is he dead, mammy? If he is, say so. I can stand anything but uncertainty!"

Her mother's sobs alone answered her. Seizing her mother's shoulders Dolly shook her in frantic earnestness.

"Speak! Quick! Tell me what you know!"

"Don't take on so, Dolly," whimpered Mrs. Felder. "It hed to come inside a year anyhow; so it's just as well t'be over an' done for 't wanst ruther'n after ye hed a big family t' keer fer and yerself git tin'—"

"Tell me what you know! What's become of Lucien? He isn't dead, I tell you! I saw him just before I woke up. He's alive! I know it! I know it!"

"No he haint alive nuther," retorted Mrs. Felder with rising temper, for Dolly had shaken her most violently:—"He's dead an' all burned to a cinder by lightnin', an' Jo's gone after what's left of him!"

Dolly did not scream. Her hands fell nerveless into her lap. In the blue eyes there came a look of unutterable horror; the lips, struggling in vain to whisper a word, were white and drawn tightly over her teeth, and her tongue refused its office.

Mrs. Felder had prepared herself for an outacy, for hysterics, and convulsions, but this stony, speechless agony, terrified her.

"Dolly! Dolly! Dolly! speak to me!" screamed the mother, "Don't look at me that way! Oh, Lord, Lord! I've driv her out her mind! Janet! Janet! come quick! Dolly's gone out her mind! Git

the nabers, git a doctor, oh! Lord! Lord! what hev I did! what hev I did! what hev I did!"

This wild outcry sounded in Dolly's ears, but its purport was unheeded.

"Where was it mammy?" came slowly from the white, rigid lips, sounding as if spoken afar off.

Mrs. Felder's screams ceased. She stared at Dolly and laughed hysterically. Dolly's eyes appealed to her for an answer.

"Twas up on Dickson's limit, and Lucien was under a tree, an' the lightnin' struck it an' burnt him up, septic' his watch an' ring an' lances an' things. I'm skeered t' tell ye, Dolly, it's so ter'ble."

Dolly's hands were pressed tightly over her eyes, as if to shut out the terrible sight. "Are you sure there can't be a mistake?"

"No, Dolly, sartin, sure. Leastwise Jo is, an' the detective, for they found the ring on his finger an' the watch all burnt 'long side o' him, an' his horse a-wanderin' through the woods half starved, so I guess there can't be no mistake 'bout it, though I wish there was for your sake, even though he was tried for murder, an' like enuff hung, so that mebbe it's best just as it is."

With a low wail of anguish Dolly fell back on her pillow, and when consciousness returned and her blue eyes opened and saw her father's face bending over her own, there was another new-made grave in the little burying-ground by the church on the side road and not twenty yards away from a costly stone, which already recorded the virtues of Peter Klimmer, the people pointed out the mound of brown earth "where Doctor Strange's re-mains was buried."

The funeral was a sad one. The scholars who had loved and feared the haughty school-master wept over his grave. The coffin was not opened, but the chill terrors of death were never more painfully brought home to the people than when the clods rattled on the shell which the bystanders felt contained the remains of Peter Klimmer's murderer.

Parson Meeker, in the funeral sermon which he delivered, had spoken of the wedding, of the murder, of the pride and power of the dead, of the thunder-bolt of God, which had stricken down the young man and avenged a crime. To Jo's tortured soul he spoke no comfort, but pointed a warning to those who try to live "without God, having no hope in the world," by recounting the miseries which had been heaped upon the "infidel." Parson Meeker said that Jo's heart had been hardened like Pharaoh's, and the plagues had followed. His beloved daughter had been taken from him as the wife of

another, and yet in his loneliness his heart had not softened. His son-in-law was dishonored by suspicion and stricken dead by the mighty hand of Providence, and still the "infidel" refused to bow his stiff neck to "the yoke which was easy." Jo's face was buried in his hands; the tears ran down his cheeks, and his whole frame was shaken by his mighty grief. Thinking that the time had come when this brand of sin was to be snatched from the burning, Parson Meeker grew still more personal and pointed in his words. In a voice shrill and trembling with excitement and fervor, he cried: "Brothering, he weeps but he don't repent; the devil is a whisperin' to him t' go on as he's a goin', that the wust is over; but I tell ye it hain't over! His darter lies sick nigh to death, an' if he don't give his heart to God an' teren't his unbelief an' stubborn sin, she'll be took from him, too, like the fust born was slain wher the lintel an' doorway wa'n't marked by the blood of the lamb."

Joe's hands dropped from his face and the white-crowned head rose grandly up. For a moment his honest eyes blazed with wrath, before which Parson Meeker quailed, and in his confusion he announced a hymn, after which he stumbled through a prayer, and the coffin was carried to the grave.

It was a funeral not to be forgotten. Parson Meeker's warning had seemed a threat which many resented in their heart-felt pity and admiration for the grief-stricken Jo.

"Pah" Watson was enraged, and told Parson Meeker that he had taken a cowardly advantage of Jo Felder, and going home the majority condemned the parson's cruel conduct, and hoped that "the young widder" might live to comfort her father's old age.

The disgrace which had fallen on Lucien's name, made the neighbors loth to speak it. They did not like to call her Dolly Felder, for she had been married, and when they tried to say Dolly Strange or Mrs. Strange, the name choked them. Thus it was in delicate kindness and in sympathy for her sorrows, they learned to speak of her as "the young widder up to Felder's."

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### HOMELESS HOPELESS.

Crash! With the deafening roar of the thunder came an electric shaft which smote a mighty pine, and scarce had the blinding lightning paled, before flame enveloped the tree and underbrush. Lucien's horse reared with a wild snort of fear, and then stood trembling in the little narrow, un-

frequented road. Half aroused from the dizzy trance into which he had fallen, the cry of "Lucien! Lucien!" still ringing in his ears, and the picture of his wife's perfidy burning his brain, he could not realize his position. For three hours he had ridden at a mad pace, and now was in the pine limits, on an unused timber road. The flash of lightning which shivered the tree and was burning its splintered trunk, revealed to him the figure of a man, prone on the ground, and as his aching eyes peered into the darkness he could still see the motionless figure, around which the flames—already dying out—were playing. The instincts of the physician were strong within him, and galloping into the timber, his horse snorting and plunging with fear, he sprang from his saddle and found a body burned almost to a crisp. At once he recognized the uselessness of an effort to do anything, and as he stood gazing at the charred figure, in the bitterness of his heart he wished it had been his fate to die and leave the world, which for love's sake he had lost. His future life! What would it be? Where was he going? Dolly false and lost to him for ever! Wringing his hands and groaning aloud he stood and prayed the great God of the storm to strike him dead, Aye dead! The world was dead to him, and he had told Dolly that to her he was dead. She could marry Tommy Watson, he would return no more to trouble her.

Slowly he straightened himself, and drawing his case of little instruments from his pocket he opened it and took out a lance. He would kill himself, and then she would be free. He looked at the charred corpse, and the thought that his body might lie for weeks in that lonely wood and be torn by hogs and devoured by vultures, made his soul revolt at its own cowardice. Why not let this man be supposed to be the Lucien Melroy Strange who that night had banished himself from the world of home and love. He laughed aloud, his grating voice sounding discordant and inhuman even in his own ears. He went nearer to the blackened figure; it even pleased him to see that it was the remains of a tall man, and picking up a stick found that his height agreed with that of the body. Hair and eyes and clothing were burned away. No one could tell the difference. Gathering some coals he dropped his surgical case beside the body and saw it burn where the instruments would naturally fail had they been in the pocket of the corpse; then his watch—his father's watch—was dropped into another heap of coals and blackened by the smoke and flame. Had he anything else which

would be sought as an identification? The buttons on his coat! they too were cut off and dropped into the fire. He caught sight of a ring on his finger! Dolly would remember that he wore it! He took it from his finger and kissed it. How well he remembered when she gave it to him. The memories of the past overpowered him and in his agony he wept aloud. Then came a sense of his shame and wrong, and he dropped the ring beside the ghastly hand, which by chance was but partly burned. That would not do, he must put it on the finger; and stooping down he slipped the band of gold over the crackling joints, and with a half-crazy laugh he stood beside the body and bade it farewell.

"Lucien Melroy Strange, adieu! Twice dishonored, you are dead, and your lovely widow is now free to marry the fool she loves. The fool she did not love she will never see again. My dear fellow you are in luck to be dead. Fate has been against you, and now the devil has you all to himself. Farewell, I hope you'll have a large funeral and a handsome monument; your mother-in-law will enjoy the excitement immensely. Adieu, Pleasant dreams!"

Day was breaking, the rain falling in torrents, and the wind blowing fiercely. A little bundle of clothes tied in a red handkerchief attracted Lucien's attention, and with a reckless laugh he seized it and was starting away when his horse caught his eye. Patting the tired, shivering beast on the shoulder he kissed the dumb brute. "Good-bye, Dixie!" and gazing through the storm-bent trees down the abandoned road, he cried, "Oh, Dolly! Dolly! Dolly! 'tis thus we part forever! Oh, Dolly! Dolly! Dolly! how I love you! My God, why should I suffer thus!"

His reason was unhinged, and as he wept he held his hand to his ear, his face intent and every nerve strained in listening. To his ears came Dolly's cry as he rode away from her, "Lucien! Lucien!" He passed his hand over his forehead and stared about him. The charred body and the glistening ring were before him.

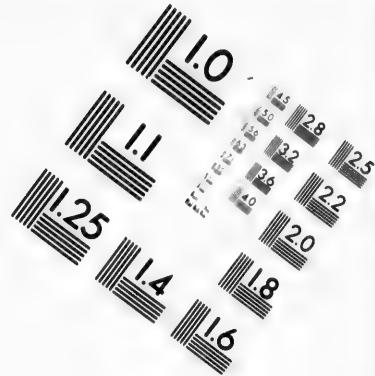
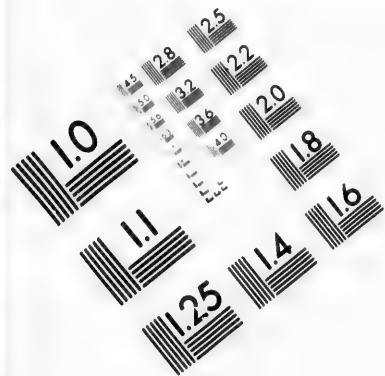
"Tell her I'm dead, Dixie; remember me to Pappie and Mammy. You might say I was quite intimate with her husband once, and that I knew her too, but that doesn't matter. He won't care. Good-bye, Dixie. I must leave. I have quite a walk ahead of me between here and nowhere, so I must start, or I won't get there in time for breakfast. I'd untie you, Dixie, only your master may wake up and want to ride home."

He stood hesitatingly by the horse, his dripping clothes clinging to him, the burning black eyes fierce with the insanity of fever, his face ashen white, and the strong hands tremulously clasping the bundle tied in a red handkerchief.

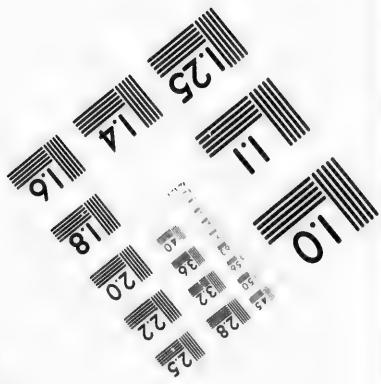
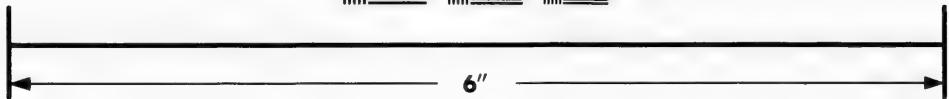
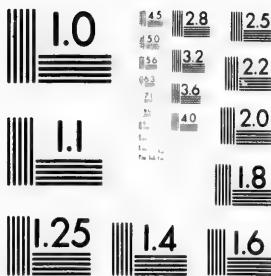
"Oh, Dolly! Dolly! Dolly!" he moaned; "God forgive you!"

With a last wave of his hand he plunged into the thicket, and hour after hour walked and ran through pine and slashing, past deserted lumber camps, and northward where as yet the axe had scarce been heard. Rocks and rivers were nothing to him; watching the sun, he held his course, deviating for nothing, stopping never. When night came, he was four-score miles from the new house in Fellersburg, with the pretty furniture, and the blue sign with gilt letters on the door. Even Dolly would not have recognized him. His clothes were torn to shreds, his face and hands scratched and bruised and encrusted with dirt. While the sun could be seen he had hurried forward, with no aim save to go northward as quickly as possible; now the last glimmer had died away, and he stood looking helplessly at the sky with vacant eyes. He began to cry, and creeping under a wild grape-vine, sought to hide himself. At length he slept, his arm clasped tightly about the trunk of a tree, and all night long he was begging Dolly to keep him from falling over a precipice. In the morning he opened his bundle and chewed some of the dried meat it contained, and put on the dirty blue overalls and checked shirt, with a half defined hope they would protect him from the briars and brush. His hat was gone, his boots torn, and as he walked and ran all day long, his bruised and bleeding feet left many a bloody footprint on the rocks. As night came again he was no longer striding northward; lame and tottering, he was groping in the dark, crying softly to himself, and asking the trees where they thought Dolly was. His trembling limbs refused longer to carry him, and he lay down to sleep, aching in every bone. All day he had been in vain trying to think; he could remember nothing; his head ached and he was faint and dizzy.

Fortunately he had fallen near a little trading post, and next morning was found by a dog whose master carried him to the little house of the priest. In a week he was better, but nearly a month had passed before he could read the names of the saints printed on the cheap pictures on the wall. As he grew stronger, he began to remember, but it seemed years since he had seen Dolly. The scene in the room behind his office, Tommy Watson kissing Dolly's hands—came back



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with the indistinct pain that an old man might feel while re-reading the love letters of his wife's youth.

A kind Providence has so arranged it that a month of delirium and the preceding hours of agony, make a gap in memory which is like half a lifetime. As the priest came in and felt his pulse and told him that he was much better, Lucien's sunken eyes were fixed questioningly upon him.

"Have I been here long?" he inquired, faintly.

"Frove wakes nixt Monday," answered a hearty Irish voice, in which the soot brogue wrapped the words like a garment, "an' it's glad I am to see that ye are not intirely bereft of your moind!"

The picture-faces of saints, the rosary hanging by the little looking-glass, the rough praying stool covered with mink skins, the wooden cross and the white figure of the crucified Saviour suspended above—his eyes had grown used to these surroundings, but his mind found no explanation of the habit which made them familiar.

"Is that all—only five weeks; I thought it was many years; it seems so distant; I can hardly remember, it seems so long ago," Lucien explained in a feeble, spiritless voice.

"Don't troy or ye'll be sick another month, an' I couldn't stand that," answered the priest, heartily, as he rose to go.

"Where am I? Tell me, please!"

"Just about a hundred moiles from everywhere else, in charge of a priest, who is looking after the salvation of Indians and doesn't propose to let ye talk yourself back into delirium."

The door closed softly, and he was alone staring at the prints of the saints and wishing, in a confused sort of way, that the colors in the Madonna were less brilliant and incongruous—there was a look about her eyes like Dolly's! Dolly! Dolly! His wife! Of course she would have forgotten him by this time; it was so long ago.

After taking his medicine from the priest's kind hand, an hour later he fell asleep trying to think how many months it was; would he ever see her again?

He was rapidly improving, and sat by the doorway looking at the great river and shadowy forest. It was only six weeks since he kissed Dolly farewell as he rode away in the twilight; only six weeks since he returned and saw Tommy Watson caressing her in her bedroom; for the first time since his sickness his blood boiled with shame and anger, but his rage passed quickly away; it seemed so long ago that were folly to be enraged. He must think of the future, not of the past.

Long enough had he troubled the kindly priest. Where would he go? What would he do?

The river stretched majestically southward; the thick pines stood sentry on the horizon's furthest shore; the sun was sinking behind the big tree on the western hill, which was like the one behind Feller's. Why not go back and see the old place? Again came the burning flush and the sense of shame and humiliation. He looked at the river and sighed, "The river! the river!"

"Well, young man, what about the river?" cried the round-faced priest, solemnly. "Is it suicide ye're thinking of? Have I been nursing ye back to life so that ye'd be able to murder yourself and your soul?"

"I wasn't thinking of suicide, Father Flynn," explained Lucien, wearily. "I was wondering where the river came from and where it would take me. I don't know what to do or where to go. My sickness seems to have robbed me of hope and impulse."

"Why not go whence you came?" inquired Father Flynn, drawing his cleanly shaved lips severely over the prominent teeth which gave him such a weak and good-natured look.

"Never, never!" cried Lucien, suddenly turning with burning eyes to the priest.

"Why?" inquired Father Flynn, as his fat hand dropped softly over Lucien's bony fingers.

"Because—because—because—" answered Lucien with tremulous hesitancy, "because I won't."

"Because you won't!" quoted the priest slowly, and pausing long. "Or because you daren't?"

"I dare go back, Father Flynn, but I will not. I fled from sin and shame, but not from any crime of mine!"

"Who is Dolly?" asked the priest.

"Father Flynn, am I in the confessional?"

"Yes, if you are in the church."

"I was baptized in the church. My mother was a Catholic, but I have not been true."

"Never moind just now, my son. Tell me what weighs on your heart and I'll see what I can do to comfort ye."

The sun had been hidden for an hour when Lucien ceased speaking. The recital of his sorrows brought them back to him, but still there was the gulf of shadowy time fixed between the passionless, hopeless to-day and the beautiful yesterday, when Dolly was true.

"Who, then, is it that is dead that ye were talking about in your fever."

"Myself," answered Lucien, "slowly. "Whoever it was who lay dead beneath

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the lightning-stricken tree has now no name but mine, and I have none but the one I take when I leave your door to meet mankind again."

"You are wrong, my son," cried the priest, "Your wife is innocent of sin. I cannot explain, because I do not know, but sure I am as if I had a vision from heaven that yez have misjudged her and wronged her. Wasn't there any reason for the man's presence there except the wan that made the blood in your veins boil over and drown your reason?"

"Father Flynn, say no more; you cannot persuade me; my whole being revolts at the idea of returning to one I am convinced is false and heartless—but I love her, I love her, and would give my life to believe in her again and die with her hand in mine."

"She is innocent, proud fool, your heart tells ye that. But the seeing of something ye couldn't understand has set your pride aloft and the poor girl 'll die grieving for ye, while you run wild in the world thinking she is false to ye. Listen to me, wayward boy. I've seen the world and read the face of guilt and heard the story of woe in the confessional, as it is spoken to God with me there only as the witness who shall chide and fix penance, and I know yez are wrong. The poor girl loves ye as she only should love her God, and her only sin is that."

Lucien turned wearily away, saying in a sullen way, "It's no use, I made up my mind when the circumstances were all before me, and I could not have been mistaken. Speak of it no more!"

Father Flynn was mortified and angry, as he retorted bitterly, "So yez have made up your moind, have ye? Well, then, I'll tell ye that yez'll repent of it in years of sorrow and remorse. Loike enough, now, the poor abused little girl is either slopeing under ground from grief or is crying out her eyes because her good-for-nothing husband is away from her. If I knew where yez belonged I'd go to her and tell her how that ye were alive, and would come back when your senses returned."

"Do no such thing!" cried Lucien. "She now thinks me dead, and rejoices in her liberty. Leave it to her! I go forth to-morrow dead to her and happiness, to live the rest of my days in the wilderness, and may God spare me the misery of many years!"

With a heavy sigh the priest bade his guest be quiet, and after much good advice, he promised to find him a place in a surveying party which was locating a line of the Canada Pacific railway through the mission and northwestward.

A few mornings later Lucien bade fare-

well to the priest. He thanked the good man for his kindness, but his heart was not in his words; he was thinking of the past and confused hopes and fears wandered through his mind.

"You've been kind to me, Father Flynn, and saved a life which is of no use to anyone, but if ever I am happy again I will seek you out and thank you as I cannot now."

"Never moind," cried the priest, "such a moind as yours will never be happy, so we may as well say good bye for ever. But if the heart yez have wethin' ye ever softens, go back and foind Dolly, and learn that she's been true. Adieu, and God bless ye!"

The surveyors moved on, and through wilderness after wilderness they camped, until at last, in the far Northwest, they disbanded, and Lucien, who had made but one friend—an Indian—followed him to the tribe, and for three long years bade farewell to civilization.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BLUE SIGN WITH THE GILT LETTERS IS  
TAKEN DOWN—A NEW ARRIVAL.

"Pappie, please take the sign off the door. Lucien will never come back," Dolly one day whispered, through her tears.

"Yer right, Dolly; it's jist as well to give up and start fresh, hain't it? I'd tuk that sign in three months ago, only I thought mebbe you'd think I was 'shamed of Lucien, an' wanted to hide any trace of him. Still it looks queer on the door when he is dead and buried so long."

"Does it seem to you that he is dead and buried, Pappie?"

Jo started when Dolly suddenly proounded this question.

"No, I'll be danged if I kin realize that he's gone, even if Parson Meeker did preach his funeral an' give me fits."

"He seems to me to be living and suffering," sobbed Dolly. "I feel it every moment. He reproaches me and wants to die. I see him every night."

Jo was unscrewing the blue sign with the gilt letters, as she said this, and he dropped his hands into his coat pockets to warm them as he looked up at Dolly.

"An' me too! I've seen the poor misguided feller a hundred times, an' he's allus the same dull lookin', spiritless critter."

"Pappie! he can't be dead, or you and I could not see him as we do—and just the same too! One night I woke up just as I was calling 'Lucien! Lucien!' in my dream, and I heard 'Dolly! Dolly! Dolly!' three times—neard it when I was awake, too."

"Don't be thinkin' that, Dolly!" sighed Jo as he resumed his work. "I measured 'the remains,' and they was the same height as Lucien where he stood under the verandah door the night you an' me an' him all was measured—"

"Oh Pappie! Pappie! don't! That was the night he told us about his first impression of you and me when he came to get the school," and Dolly dropped down on the floor and buried her face on her father's shoulder.

Jo put down his screw-driver and tried to comfort poor Dolly.

"I allus hed a ter'ble queer feelin' about that young feller from the first. Daang me if I wan't skeered of him and his set'un ways. But poor feller he was all right at heart if he hedn't hed sich a head on him!"

Even in tears Dolly loved to talk of Lucien and recall the most minute details of his life in the old farm house. "Wasn't he lovely, Pappie? So stern and proud and unlike everybody. He was the smartest man that ever came to Fellersburg, wasn't he Pappie?"

"Yes, Dolly!" answered Jo, as he laid the blue sign with the gilt letters on the floor and shut the door. "I'm afeered you'll git cold sittin' thar. Goin by the fire."

"Let me put it away," sighed Dolly, lifting the sign and holding it in her lap. "I held it up while Lucien fastened it on the door, and we were both so proud. And he laughed and said he guessed it would be six months before anybody would be able to read it plainly enough to come in and ask him to attend on any sickness. We were sitting on the floor of the hall, just like you and I, and after we got it fixed he shoved the door shut and we sat together and talked, just like you and I are doing now—"

"But it was spring then, Dolly, and its winter now, an' you'll catch cold sittin' there on the floor," interrupted Jo.

"Yes, Pappie, it's winter! winter! It will always be winter for me!"

"No, Dolly, not allus. Spring'll come agin an' make us all glad," cried Jo, patting Dolly's cheek and lifting her from the floor.

"Oh, Pappie! Pappie! if it wasn't for you I'd have to die!" sobbed poor Dolly.

"Don't feel bad, girlie! It'll be all-right yet, but ye might as well give up any idear that he's living, 'cause he haint, I'm sure a' that."

"He is living, Pappie! I can feel him and see him. If he's dead, I want to be dead, too, and be with him, where he'll know how much I love him."

Jo's whole life was devoted to Dolly. The fear that she might lose her reason or

her life never left him. He wanted her to close up her house and go back to the old home, but she steadily refused. She would have to see the people who came there to visit her mother, but in her own house no one would think of intruding on her grief. Jo yielded at once, but Mrs. Felder insisted on Dolly's return home.

"Why, Dolly! bless my gracious! People'll git talking about ye livin' here all by yerself."

"No they won't, mammy. I guess they've done talking about me. Besides, I am not alone; Janet and Duncan are here."

"But people is talking now—so I've heern—an' asayin' that yer insane, an' that I've throwed ye off on account of the ter'ble trouble Looshen got us in. It's ter'ble hard on me, but of course I kin stand it, as fer's I'm consarned; fer all that, an' people wonderin' why you keep hid all the time, an' guessin' that mebbe you've gone loony. An' more'n that, how kin I help you through your trouble that's a comin'; an' you a-livin' here an' me a-livin' thar?"

"Mammy, dear, say no more about it. Until that is over I am going to stay here and see nobody. I do not care what people say in the reason, I cannot and will not leave here until next summer."

And she didn't leave until the summer was nearly gone, and her little baby girl was four months old.

The birth and proper handling of the baby had been the cause of intense excitement and solicitude to Mrs. Felder. The matrons of the neighborhood had been kept well informed concerning the state of affairs, and everyone who had occasion to converse with Mrs. Felder found it impossible to hear of anything but "the ter'ble time she was expectin' of, with Dolly's approachin' trouble." During and after the event Mrs. Felder excelled herself in graphic description of the "trouble," and how disappointed she was that it was a girl instead of a boy.

"I've hed sich trouble with Dolly, that I hed set great store on havin' a boy, but of course it can't be helped as fer's I'm consarned, let bygones be bygones! An' then the little critter is such a queer lookin' young mite. Her great black eyes never wink but look at ye so meanin' an' steady an' unblakin', just like its father's did, an' I can't fer the life uv me look at the poor little thing 'ithout thinkin' uv the ter'ble end Looshen come to, an' a draggin' uv the hull family down with him, too, fer of course so far's I'm consarned I can't hold up my head like I used to, though it haint no fault uv mine, as everybody knows. But as fer's Dolly's consarned, it's been a good thing

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fer her, poor, feeble thing that she's got to be by grievin' over the way Looshen carried on. The minit I gived her the baby an' she looked at it, she cried an' said it was the image of Looshen, an' now her and Joel sit lookin' at it and a-sayin' to one another the ter-biest silly stuff about its eyes and the 'xpression of Looshen and its "hawtoor" of manner; Joel's gone clean silly, an' tends to nuthin' but Dolly an' that black-eyed baby that makes me want t' cry whenever I look at it, with its mournful eyes that alius seems askin' questions an' wonderin' if ye hain't lyin' to it. Yes, Jo's gone clean silly, and if he wa'n't only fifty-nine I'd say he was gittin' doty."

In this way Mrn. Felder informed the neighbors of Dolly's devotion to the baby. But no words—not even the eloquent and voluble words of its grandmother—could describe Dolly's love for her baby. All day long she sat and watched it; when it awoke she knelt beside the cradle and looked into the deep black eyes, which were portraits of Lucien's. The baby seldom cried, and at night Dolly would start up from her sleep and see the little black-haired mite staring at her with the same questioning look which had been nearly always in Lucien's eyes. Jo and Dolly talked of nothing else. Jo was always willing to admire and Dolly to praise, and thus for hours they sat and talked about the baby. Jo was happy, because Dolly seemed like herself again, and with the return of smiles to his dawning came a great love for the baby that promised to heal the wounds which sorrow had made in Dolly's gentle heart.

What joy it was for the old man to see Dolly dancing about with the cooing and laughing baby in her arms. The clouds were beginning to pass away, and though Dolly often sat by her baby's cradle and cried for hours, yet the Dolly of old was often to be seen.

Though Dolly had closed up the pretty little house in the village and moved back to her old home, she persistently refused to see any one except some of the older women, who insisted on having a peep at the baby.

By and by the baby got a tooth, learned to walk and began to talk. Dolly needed no other society, and when little May was nearly three years old none of the young men of the village had seen Dolly for more than a moment, and then only when they had called at her father's house and had been admitted by the pale-faced girl who had a woman's quiet dignity and a silent sadness, which forbade any of the familiarity which Dolly had at one time encouraged.

People said that her troubles had broken her heart. A few contended that she was ashamed, because her husband was suspected of having been a murderer. Everybody had grown to love the sorrowful girl, and her seclusion threw around her a romance which made her the object of a thousand speculations. In all the country-side no one was so renowned for beauty, virtue and all those qualities which most adorn womankind, as the "Young Widder up to Felder's." Even though her early married days were unhappy and dishonored by her husband's crime, still there was not a marriageable man who had heard of her, who would not have esteemed himself more blessed than he dared hope, if he could win "the young widder" as his wife.

And chief among these was Malon Klimmer.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### PICKING UP THE THREADS OF THE STORY.

The morning after Peter Klimmer was murdered, Malon tied his horse at Watson's gate and went back to the field where Tommy was working, and had a long talk with that wretched young man. Tommy wept and swore by turns, and begged Malon to lend him the money. When at last Malon consented Tommy was again hilarious and proposed that they should go together and square the thing up. As they drove past Dr. Strange's office Tommy, in a moment of weakness, told his companion of the adventure he had with Dolly when he had resolved to steal money enough to settle up the scrape with old Hawkins. As he described his sensations, Malon's face turned ghastly white, and Tommy, cried out:

"By gosh, I must be a good story-teller to scare you like that by only tellin' what a funk I was in!"

Malon mopped his face with his handkerchief, and taking a whisky bottle from his pocket, swallowed an enormous drink before he passed it to Tommy.

"It's nuthin'!" answered Malon. "I wish I could git that near Dolly Felder. If I did, I'd carry her off and keep her, married er not. I can't help wantin' either to hev her er kill her. I don't know what's the matter 'ith me! I'd rather sit an' look at her a mile off than hev all the finest wimmen on earth right here in the buggy 'ith me."

Tommy out of the corner of his eye glanced at Malon and unconsciously moved further away from him. The big, black-haired savage was looking sullenly at his horse, his coarse lips drawn tightly over his teeth, and the dull eyes a somber

Mack, with that red tinge which is seen in an ember that a puff of wind will brighten into a burning coal. Tommy was startled at Malon's intensity and watched his companion sharply white in silence they jogged along. Every now and then Malon rubbed his hands on the knees of his pantaloons as if to wipe off some moisture, and the brutal lips would grow livid as some thought passed through his sluggish brain.

The bottle was again produced. While holding it up to his lips Malon shivered, and passed the flask to Tommy, while with the lines between his knees he opened a blade of his knife and cleaned his finger nails.

The bottle was passed back, and Malon finished its contents. Then the now hilarious Tommy enquired how it was that Malon was devoting so much attention to his finger nails and personal appearance—"Going to call on the lovely Mrs. Strange on your way home mebbe!"

The dull eyes blazed into a reddening, scorching light, and as Malon turned towards Tommy the latter felt an almost irresistible impulse to jump out of the buggy. "Don't be so —— smart," snarled Malon, but even while he spoke he glanced uneasily at his hands, and tried to keep them out of sight. "What the —— do you see the matter of my hands?"

Tommy assured him that he had noticed nothing, and was only joking at them because he had noticed him rubbing them and cleaning the nails.

"Don't be so —— smart, I tell ye," reared Malon, "you didn't see nuthin' of the kind, and for two cents I'd thump the stufin' out'n ye."

Tommy was thoroughly frightened and after apologising profusely wanted to get out and walk, but this incensed Malon still further. Seizing Tommy's arm, he reared:

"You would, hey! Git out and walk, hey! an' then swear that I throwed you out because you saw me rubbin' blood —er—er some sick stuff off'n my hands? Not by a —— site! You didn't notice nuthin' the matter of me, now did ye, even if you had to swear to it?"

Tommy swore again that he was only joking, and began talking of something else. Malon relapsed into the silent silence which was his chief characteristic. He was a tall, muscular man, in every sense coarse. His dark skin was rough and scaly, his hair a coarse, lusterless black, his long moustache bristling, black and uneven. Physically a well-built man, with coarsely even features and rough, hairy hands, Malon Klimmer was repulsive to the majority of men and women. Yet he had a mas-

terful way and a brutal, unbending will, which made him a force in the Feldersburg district.

"You've got ter go in an settle fer us both and tell the squire to go down and git the old man to sign us a paper straight 'n' this hull — business. I'll wait at the tavern, an' you kin come there while the squire is goin' after the old man's receipt."

While Malon gave these directions the gleam in his sullen eyes warned Tommy to ask no questions.

An hour later they were on their way home from the village with the matter all fixed. Tommy was not as drunk as Malon but much more noisy.

"If it hadn't been fer that smart aleck of a doctor there'd never bin a word said about our scrape. The squire sed so!" cried Tommy, with an oath.

"Let's lay fer'm some night," suggested Malon, turning to Tommy and looking him squarely in the face. The red gleam in Malon's eyes frightened Tommy, but with a forced laugh, he asked:

"What fer?"

"Hell!" roared Malon, "What fer? T'kiss him of course. I want ter shake hands and make it up 'th'm. Why, to kill him, curse his eyes—an' then I'd marry the widder. You don't care about her now, do you? an' if ye did ye couldn't hav' er!"

"If she was a widder ter-morrer she wouldn't tech either of us with a ten-foot pole. The fine-haired doctor has spiled her for any country buck, you kin bet on that!" answered Tommy, who began to fear that Malon intended to lay in wait for Doctor Strange.

"Not ter-morrer, mebbe not, but five year from ter-morrer, if she'd bin a widder. I'd fergit him and take me, 'er I'm a nar—an' I'd wait that long fer her too, by — — —"

As he spoke Malon was leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, his face turned to Tommy, darkened by a look of mingled lust and hatred, which blended into a ferocious leer. Malon's concluding oaths were mistaken by his horse for a command to stop, and stop he did so suddenly that Malon lurched forward and nearly fell out of the buggy. In a frightful rage Malon seized the whip, and till his arm was weary lashed his horse and swore most awful oaths that he'd "learn the — — — critter to keep a goin'" till he told it to stop.

Tommy had never before seen this phase of Malon's character, and as he remembered that Rene had been the companion of this brute for the past six months and considered herself engaged to him, he couldn't understand why Malon

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should avow his passion for Dolly and  
show off the worst side of his temper.

The same thought was in Malon's mind.  
"Of course," said he, with a leer, "it  
won't make no difference atwixt me an'  
Rene!"

Tommy said, "I s'pose not," and then  
thought if he could prevail with his sister  
it would make a good deal of difference.

They had not been home an hour when  
Peter Klimmer's murder was discovered.  
Next day came the knowledge that Dr.  
Strange was missing; later still that he  
was dead. The funeral was over and Fellersburg believed that the remains of Dr.  
Strange had been buried. Malon was  
happy, and determined that he would win  
Dolly some day to marry him. From that  
moment 'Rene Watson was almost deserted  
by her lusty lover, and one day Tommy  
told her the reason. 'Rene's rage knew  
no bounds when Tommy assured her that  
Malon would wait for Dolly for a half-  
score years rather than marry any one  
else.

Fate sometimes plots strange revenges.  
Within a month Jonas Whitefoot, a wid-  
ower of sixty, married 'Rene and took  
her to his farm across the road from Malon  
Klimmer's. People laughed and sneered;  
they looked and laughed again when they  
saw 'Rene and her husband:—she still  
young and almost beautiful; he old and  
shrunken and lame, with grown-up and  
married children older than 'Rene. Jonas  
was a drover, and for a year had lived  
alone, and when he married 'Rene it was  
on the distinct understanding that she  
must not expect too much.

A hired man who left Jonas Whitefoot's  
employ because he had too much to do  
and too little to eat, started a story that  
when Jonas was away the mice would  
play, which meant, as he explained, that  
Malon Klimmer was too intimate with  
Mrs. Whitefoot. Of course this story  
was partially believed, but then Fellers-  
burg was a very gossipy place, and a bad  
story about almost any one would find  
some one to repeat it as gospel truth.

### CHAPTER XXXVI.

#### "LEADING A BETTER LIFE."

The winter after his father was murder-  
ed, Malon Klimmer joined the church. It  
was no rash move. There was great ex-  
citement, and much vigorous preaching  
at the protracted meetings in the church  
by the side-road, but to neither could  
Malon's conversion be ascribed.

Ever since his father's funeral he had  
been acting differently, and the neighbors  
said Malon felt conscience-stricken, be-  
cause the old man had gone out of the  
world unprepared. Many people who

hitherto had thought him an unmitigated  
scoundrel, began to speak of him as a  
fine young man, and make cheerful com-  
parisons between the present and the  
time when Malon came home drunk every  
night. Now Malon kept away from  
taverns, and was never seen to drink.  
The story that he had a barrel of whisky  
in the cellar of his barn was dis-  
credited, for no one had either seen or tasted  
it. True, people who had called to see  
him late at night had found him muddled  
and in a furious temper, but this was  
ascribed to a dislike to being disturbed.  
He wore good clothes, fashionably made,  
and when he took Sadie out for a drive,  
kid gloves encased his brawny hands. He  
was rich—as riches go in a country place  
—worth forty or fifty thousand dollars—  
and could afford to put on style. The  
neighbors laughed at first when he was  
putting on airs, but they knew better  
than to smile in his face. He knew he  
was awkward and clumsy, but Sadie told  
him he would soon get over it. She often  
heard him tear the well-fitting coat from  
his back and throw it on the bed with a  
resounding curse, but he persevered.

Even when he grew accustomed to his  
fashionable garments, he found his words  
and actions were still as coarse and  
clumsy as ever. Sadie assured him that  
if he went out more, attended church and  
temperance societies, he would learn to be  
easier in his manner. He tried it, and  
took Sadie with him. He actually  
helped his sister to alight from the buggy;  
formerly it had been his custom to let her  
scramble out as best she could.

He took his sister on a visit to distant  
friends, and while away learned to take  
off his hat and bow. He practised it on  
everybody he met, and was considered  
quite courtly. Still he was clumsy, and  
did not know what to do or how to do it.  
Sadie suggested a term at a commercial  
college, and to a business college he went,  
and every night he sat on a front seat at a  
theater, learning from the actors how to  
 deport himself. His contact with the  
world changed his exterior wonderfully,  
and on his return home he was welcomed  
as the rural Chesterfield. He announced  
his intention of running for the reeveship  
of the township, and at the revival which  
had just commenced he joined the church,  
much to everyone's surprise. Parson  
Meeker was quite overcome with joy,  
and, rising to his feet, gave thanks  
that another brand had been snatched  
from the burning. He spoke with emo-  
tion of how Malon's heart had been soft-  
ened by the affliction of losing his father,  
and foretold that the young man would  
prove a bright and shining light and a  
city set upon a hill.

Malon's face flushed as the parson spoke, and into his sullen eyes came the red gleam which made his face doubly villainous in expression. He was wondering what "the young widder" would think when she heard of his many good deeds! Would she learn to think of him as the leading man in the neighborhood, and finally say "yes" when he asked her to marry him? In his heart he despised Parson Meeker and the church, but he decided that he must reform so exceedingly much that Dolly could not but hear of it. His heavy voice rang out every night full of music and passion when the "invitation hymn" was sung, and the revival swept the country side, and Malon Klumner was a leader in the movement. It became unfashionable to be a "tough" such as Malon had been, and the bad young men all "joined the meetin'" and Feldersburg saw a very quiet winter. Malon passed around the plate in church when collection was being taken up, and on two occasions had read a chapter in prayer meeting. His goodness became notorious, and when at last he subscribed five hundred dollars towards enlarging the church, Parson Meeker again rose and publicly gave thanks for the conversion of the young brother, whose munificence proved beyond a doubt that he had had an entire change of heart. On Monday Malon sent him a couple of hams, a quarter of beef and three hundred weight of flour. On Sunday Parson Meeker again referred to the young brother whose gifts to the Lord were so numerous and costly and would bring such an eternal reward.

The stories about the barrel of whisky in the barn loomed up sometimes, and a few of the unregenerate even went so far as to accuse Malon of "keeping his skin full" of whisky all the time. Sadie was evidently afraid of her reformed brother, but then everybody knew that Malon had a bad temper. He became reeve of the township, next year warden of the county, and had been nominated for parliament, but he had never been able to speak a word to Dolly. He had gone to Jo and told him that he did not believe Dr. Strange had killed his father, but Jo had scarcely thanked him for his pains. Again he visited Felder and asked his advice about a proposed bridge over the river, almost at his door, but Jo was cold and ungrateful, and thought the old bridge good enough. Dolly had not been in sight at all, and Malon gnawed his lip savagely, but held his temper. While the bridge was being built he lost no opportunity of running into Felder's house, and twice saw Dolly

leading little baby May through the orchard.

Watching one day, Malon saw Dolly and her baby girl down by the river, and he slipped through the orchard and met "the young widder," of whom he had dreamed for years, face to face. He had thought of her as lovely, but her beauty overwhelmed him; his old awkwardness came back, his tongue was stiff and his hands trembled; the sullen black eyes could not look into the pure face before him, and with downcast look and half averted face, he stammered that he had long desired to tell her that he did not believe her husband had killed his father.

Dolly was a woman now, magnificently beautiful. Like her father, she had a pure, noble face, which made one do reverence to the fair woman, who seemed untainted by the devices and deceipts of the world. Still robed in black, her graceful figure was voluptuous and shapely, her hair was tied in heavy bands around her head, and in the bright wondering eyes there still lingered the coquetry of old.

"I thank you," she answered, quietly, "for taking the trouble to tell me, but I did not imagine for a moment that you or any other person of ordinary sense could suppose Dr. Strange guilty of such a crime."

"Of course, of course!" stammered Malon, hastily, "but I've bin tryin' to live a different life, and thought it'd be right for me to come an' say what I've said, particularly on your account, an' you let as ye be."

While Malon's faltering tongue was framing excuses for his intrusion, Dolly watched his face and downcast eyes. Little May stood on the rustic seat, clinging to her mamma's arm, and staring with wonder and alarm at the visitor. The silence was awkward, and Malon, inuttering some commonplace, raised his hat and his eyes to say farewell. The sullen eyes, like molten blackness, were turned toward Dolly and caught the wondering look in her face; the blood rushed to his cheek, and his eyes dilating seemed like a blur of magnetic light, from which she could not avert her gaze.

"Well! Good-day! I couldn't expect you to thank me, but I've tried to be worth thankin'. I know you hate me because the doctor did, but I've changed since then, an' know I was in the wrong."

"Please don't speak of the past! It has been sad enough, and amidst all our sorrows I can forgive everyone," answered Dolly, mournfully dropping her eyes, as she raised May in her arms and turned towards the house.

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"I hope," he said, in the measured  
tones of recital, "that you do not feel  
angry at me because misfortune an'—an'  
trouble came to both of us to onc't, an'  
people—an' folks kinder connected the  
two, while I would uv give my right hand  
to uv sheltered ye from such talk!"

Into the deep blue of Dolly's eyes came  
a look of greater wonder, and then—  
when the insinuating and protecting  
tone jarred on her ear—it was fol-  
lowed by the gathering of the deli-  
cate eyebrows into a frown of utter  
contempt. Malon's eyes fell, but in  
his desperate endeavor to prolong the  
interview until he had said all that for  
years he had been learning to say when  
first he should meet Dolly, he leaned to-  
wards little May, and with his finger  
touched her under the chin.

With a shriek of fear and rage the little  
copy of her father clutched her mamma's  
neck with both arms, screaming the while:  
"Tate 'im away! Tate ze nassy man  
away!"

Dolly, glad to find an excuse for anger,  
glared at Malon for an instant while she  
comforted May. "Be kind enough not  
to touch her. She dislikes strangers and  
seems to recognize her father's enemies."

Dolly swept past him with the dignity  
of an insulted queen. May clinging to her  
neck and crying scornfully, "We don'  
like 'e nassy man, do us, mommie?"

"No, we do not like the 'nassy man,'"  
said Dolly, soothingly. But as she spoke  
she glanced over her shoulder to see if  
Malon was near enough to hear, and the  
motion was unintentionally as coquettish  
as were the frolics of the years before she  
met Lucien. Had Malon smiled into her  
face as she turned she might have changed  
her opinion of him. Instead, she saw in  
the sullen eyes the dull-red gleam of the  
coal being fanned into a blaze. It spoke  
a volume of hate, and she knew that the  
hate was for her baby and she was doubly  
insulted and enraged.

Without another word he strode hastily  
to the road, and springing over the fence  
rode homeward at a break-neck pace.

If anyone had seen Malon at eight  
o'clock that night, as he walked viciously  
up and down his room, drinking frequent-  
ly and deeply from a black bottle, the  
story that Parson Meeker's pet was  
drinking himself to death would have  
gained ground. It was the same every  
night, not a sleep but a drunken torpor  
from which, unrefreshed, he awoke to  
stay the fever of his thirst with more  
whiskey.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### MALON'S LOVE-MAKING.

Next morning Malon was ill. His hard  
drinking had brought on a fever, through  
which Sadie nursed him most tenderly.

Two weeks later, weak and spiritless,  
he lay gazing vacantly at the chintz cur-  
tains over the window. His big hairy  
hand fell nerveless on the counterpane,  
and the swarthy, unshaven face was as  
nearly melancholy as the face of a brute  
can ever be.

Sadie sat beside him, reading aloud  
from a newspaper. "Do you know, Lon,"  
she cried, throwing the paper on the floor,  
"that Jo Felder has lost twelve thous-  
and dollars by somebody running away?"

"No?" interrogated Malon, with great  
interest.

"Yes. 'Rene told me last night, and  
she said she guessed it'd bring Mrs. Dolly  
down off her high horse if Jo had to sell  
his farm to pay it!"

"I wish he would," cried Malon. "I  
wish they'd git throwed into the road, an'  
then the young widder'd listen to reason  
an' have me."

"Why, Lon Klimmer! are you still in  
love with Dolly?" exclaimed Sadie, looking  
wonderingly at her brother. "I thought  
you gave that up when she got married?"

"No, ner never will. I'm gunt to marry  
her, an' if ye hadn't bin a fool you might  
ev know'd what I was a dressin' up fer,  
an' jin'in' the meetin', an' tryin' to be the  
head man fer!" cried Malon, contemptu-  
ously. "I thought y' understood all the  
time."

Sadie was regarding him with a look of  
mingled admiration and fear. "And you  
never meant to be good only to please  
her?" she said, halt aloud, as if commun-  
ing with herself.

"Don't preach to me; that old fool of  
a Meeker's done enough of that. If you  
let him in here again with his 'passages  
of scripter' and his 'word of prayer,'  
I'll smash his head, I will — — —",  
roared Malon with such vigorous oaths  
that Sadie rose to go.

"Sit down, damn it!" Malon continued,  
pointing with sweat-covered and trem-  
bling hand to the chair from which Sadie  
had risen. She resumed her seat, and  
with her little hands folded in her lap,  
listened to what her worthy brother had  
to say.

"You know'd I was after Dolly, didn't  
ye, now?" he demanded.

"No, I didn't! You ought to be  
ashamed, wanting to marry her when  
people think her husband murdered our  
own father."

"I don't believe he did, an' you've said a  
hundred times you don't believe it your-

self, but what'd I care even if he did ; it was good riddance anyhow, an' you an' me haint none the worse off."

"Oh, Malon, how can you talk so ! You ought to be ashamed to—"

"Shet up," roared Malon, "I don't want your opinion. What I want is for you to help me git Dolly, an' — — I'm gun to hever if it takes ten years an' I hav to kill twenty people ! Ye hear me now, — an' I mean what I say."

"You'll be back sick again if you don't keep quiet," answered Sadie. "Of course I'll help you all I can, but I know it isn't a bit of good, and you'll be sorry if ever she does marry you, because I'm sure she won't love you after having had such a refined husband as Dr. Strange."

"———, don't make comparisons ; I've done that till I'm sick and tired. You've got to git thick with her an' visit her, an' I'll come an' bring ye home, an' then, mebbe, she'll go cut ridin' with you'n me, an' then with me, an' then I'll git ther or know the reason why."

"I can't, Lon ! Dolly doesn't like me, and I never could go near the Felders after the trouble there's been between us."

"You've gotta !" snapped Malon. "I'll find some way to bring ye together, an' then all ye'll hav to do is to act just as I tell ye."

"Oh, Lon, please don't ask me ! It will be a trap, and I'll die of shame. Just think what people would say ! And her baby, too—"

"Curse the baby, it spoiled me an' her the night afore I got sick. If it hadn't bin for the cub she'd bin all right. I wish the brat was dead." Sadie's reproachful eyes annoyed Malon, and lifting himself up to arrange his pillow he averted his face and muttered half apologetically, "It's the exact image of it's dad, an' I hated him straight enough."

"Malon, it sounds awful to hear you talk of wishing people dead and you just getting over such a bad sickness yourself," sobbed Sadie, who had taken refuge in tears.

With an oath Malon ordered her from the room. Next day he might have got up and dressed, but he still lay in his bed. Calling Sadie he made her sit beside him while he told her what to do.

"Go up to Felder's and ask to see Dolly if she ain't in sight. Tell her that the way she used me come pretty nigh killin' me, an' that I've been in bed ever since with a ragin' fever a-callin' her name all the time. Make her come with you an' see me, an' say that's the only way to save my life. D'y'e understand ?" demanded Malon, grasping Sadie's wrist in fierce earnestness. "I saw the same thing done in a play, an' it worked splendid—and

I'll get her and me talked about and she'll hav' to give in."

Sadie was dumbfounded by the suggestion, and sat staring at him in horror. "Don't sit an' look like a fool ! Go an' do what I tell ye !" thundered Malon.

"I can't ! I can't !" cried the trembling girl. "Oh, Lon ! please, Lon ! don't ask me. I couldn't look at her and tell a lie. I'd only make things worse, I know I would."

"Go and try, I tell ye ! I'd do as much for you, an' more, if you had anybody ye wanted. Will ye do it ? Say yes or no, quick, I'm choking !"

"Oh, Lon ! Lon ! I can't !" sobbed Sadie.

Malon pulled her down on the bed beside him, and coaxed and petted her. He promised to quit drinking and be a real Christian, if he got Dolly, and he'd be good to her. Why, he would give Dolly the world if he owned it. So he cajoled the trembling girl until she promised to go and do as he said. Before she left him he went over what she was to say, and instructed her in every word and motion.

Outside the door of Malon's room 'Rene Whitefoot, nee Watson, was listening. During Malon's illness she had often sat with him, and while he was getting better she flattered herself that she at last had won his heart. In the three years since her marriage she had sacrificed her honor and happiness for Malon Klimner and his growing popularity and refinement had increased her passion for the black-eyed and overbearing man who had so cruelly jilted her three years before. The revelation of his unchanged love for Dolly was a new pang to her, and as she heard Malon's plan, she smiled in a hateful way and knocked at the door.

Sadie's face was tear-stained, and Malon glared uninvitingly as 'Rene entered. Mrs. Whitefoot was self-possessed and even jolly. "I'm afraid you have been scolding Sadie ! She's been crying, and you look as cross as a sick bear !"

"None of your business," snorted Malon, as he turned his face to the wall.

Mrs. Whitefoot's face flushed crimson, but she held her temper and took no notice of Malon's insult, except to remark :

"What a pleasant temper your brother has ! He must be getting better. People are aways cross while convalescent !"

"Yes, he's as cross as a bear," sighed Sadie ; "let's leave him alone !"

An hour later 'Rene knocked at Jo Felder's door, and Dolly met her face to face, for the first time since the night of the housewarming.

"Dolly," began 'Rene, "I came to do you a favor. Come into the sitting-room

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Dolly at once thought of Lucien, and in  
trembling haste showed 'Rene into the  
parlor.

'Rene continued with shame-reddening  
face to confess that in old times she had to  
acted fairly, but in future she was going  
to do right. Without confessing her new  
passion for Malon, she told Dolly the plot  
she had overheard, and warned her to be  
ware of Sadie's mission.

Thoroughly frightened by 'Rene's story,  
Dolly listened in silence. When 'Rene  
ceased she extorted a promise from Dolly  
that she would never say a word about  
the source of her information, and then,  
with a hasty embrace, Mrs. Whitefoot was  
done.

Dolly could scarce believe her ears, and  
yet 'Rene's knowledge of Malon's visit  
and his dislike of little May made it im-  
possible to doubt her story.

It was nearly eight o'clock when Sadie  
Klimmer tied her pony at Jo Felder's gate  
and timidly walked up to the verandah  
and spoke to Dolly. The knowledge of  
her mission made Dolly doubly cold and  
formal, and the sense of guilt was bright-  
ening. Sadie almost out of her wits,  
Dolly's honest blue eyes looked straight  
into the dark, luminous eyes of her visi-  
tor, and Sadie was dumb. Little May  
came running forward, and climbing on a  
chair, looked into the visitor's face with  
that questioning look which reminded  
everyone of her father.

The awkward silence was broken by  
Sadie.

"Lon asked me to come! He's been  
sick ever since he spoke to you in the  
orchard, and he wanted me to bring you  
to see him. He loves you, and is longing  
to see you. I—I—I hope you will come."

Dolly pitied Sadie, but her anger got  
the better of her pity. "Tell your  
brother that if he were dying I  
would not go and see him. I dis-  
like him, and believe he is a  
villain in spite of his good professions.  
I am ashamed to see you acting as his  
tool; you at least ought to be above  
that!" Dolly's scornful voice and her  
abrupt refusal to visit Malon astonished  
Sadie, who had feared that Dolly's good  
nature would have induced her to accom-  
pany her.

Little May was watching both faces  
with childish intentness: "Se aint a  
nassy 'ooman, momme! se 'ubly auntie,  
mommie! May 'ikes' new auntie!"

Sadie glanced at the little face and  
began to cry. Bending down to kiss the  
child Sadie found a pair of baby arms  
twined around her neck: "Mayde 'uves

oo', don' ky! oo' not nassy 'ooman, is  
oo'?"

"Yes, I am a nasty woman," sobbed  
Sadie, "I don't deserve that you should  
like me!"

Rising up Sadie looked tearfully at  
Dolly and asked to be forgiven if she had  
done any harm. "I didn't want to  
come, but Lon made me do it! He  
thinks and talks of nobody but you; his  
love for you at least is sincere."

"Very!" answered Dolly, scowfully.  
"So sincere that he tries to get me to  
visit him so that he can boast of it  
through the village and get his name  
coupled with mine. Never. I've suffered  
once, but I learned the lesson, and cannot  
be placed in a false position again. I hate  
and despise your brother, and you are  
welcome to tell him so: the rest of my  
life shall be devoted to my baby, and he  
is doubly hateful when he tries to intrude  
himself here."

Poor Sadie could say no more, and  
without even "good-night" ran down  
the steps to the gate. Tears of  
shame roiled down her cheeks as she  
drove home, but when she entered  
Malon's room to tell him the result of her  
visit she flew into a furious temper.  
"Fool!" she cried, "you got me insulted  
and covered with shame! She spurned  
your love, and said if you were dying  
she wouldn't look at you. She told me to  
tell you that she hates the sight of you.  
She knew at once that you wanted to get  
her talked about for coming to see you, and  
says you are a dirty villain, in spite of all  
your pious professions! And you are,  
and I could die of shame for this day's  
work."

Malon was sitting bolt upright in bed,  
his face clean shaven—in hope of Dolly  
coming—grew white with disappoint-  
ment, then reddened with shame, as Sadie  
heaped Dolly's scorn upon him. The sul-  
len eyes gleamed red, and the hairy hands  
reached out and clutched Sadie's dress.

"Did she say that? Just as you've  
said it? Them very words?"

"Yes, every word, and the way she  
said it was more than what she said," re-  
ported Sadie.

"Then, by —, I'll kill her!" With  
these words Malon sprang from the bed,  
the picture of a madman, and taking  
some garments from a hook began to  
dress himself, his hands trembling and  
his knees knocking together, with weak-  
ness. Sadie fled screaming from the  
room, and her cries brought her mother,  
who forced Malon to go back to bed.

"Gimme some whisky, then, quick!  
My head is bursting!" To quiet him his  
mother gave him his bottle, and after a  
long draught he handed it back—empty.

"The key of the barn cellar is in my pants pocket. Go and fill that bottle to onc't."

"Malon! Malon! You're killing yerself with drink," entreated his mother.

"Shut up, or I'll smash you on the head with the bottle. Go when I tell you, and go damn quick!"

She went, and again Malon, already drunk, imbibed deeply, and in the morning had relapsed into a raging fever, from which he did not recover for many days.

When Dolly heard of Malon's relapse she did not know that it was caused by whisky and rage, and her gentle heart was troubled lest she had been too severe. When she consulted Jo about it he patted her on the cheek and asked her if she remembered the night he and Lucien had the talk about instinct and reason. "Yer instinct was right then, Dolly, but yer heart and yer reason ran away with ye. Yer right again, Dolly. Stick to it this time an' don't let the critter come nigh ye. He's a bad one, the very worst that's made, in my opinion, an' he'll be found out yet, see if he don't."

Still Dolly's heart was a little softened towards Malon. No woman is without vanity that she cannot enjoy the sensation of pride which comes with a sense of power over a strong man. She began to feel sorry that it was impossible for Malon ever to be happy.

### CHAPTER XXXVIII. FOR HIS HONOR'S SAKE.

Five or six hundred yards in advance of a company of United States cavalry, an Indian and a white man are riding warily along. It would be difficult to tell at a glance the white man from the Indian, but the magnificent proportions of the horseman and the white brow beneath the broad-brimmed hat revealed a better birth than that of the Sioux beside him. In the three and a half years which had elapsed since his flight from Feldersburg, Lucien Strange had never visited either village or town. For three years he had lived in Wyoming or Montana, and now he and the Indian, who became his friend while they together carried a surveyor's chain in the Northwest, were guiding a company of troops toward a hostile Indian camp.

The camp was captured, but several soldiers were wounded. Lucien's ready skill in dressing the wounds attracted the captain's attention and the scout was pressed to return with the company to nurse the sick. Lucien had greatly changed; the free life he had led developed his physique, until he was a giant in strength. His magnificent figure, and

darkly defiant face, together with an air of proud reserve and complete self-possession, made him the hero of the camp with whom he lived. He seldom spoke, and no one knew whence he came. His strength and skill made him respected, and "Big Antoine" had the reputation of being the bravest and most reckless man in the territories. Always seeking danger, harm never befel him. The captain endeavored to talk to Big Antoine as the troop went back to the fort, but got nothing for his pains.

"You are a doctor," asserted the officer confidentially.

"Indeed," answered Lucien, coldly.

"Yes, indeed; and a skilful one, too. I wonder that you live as you do?"

To this Lucien made no answer, and the officer quit, in disgust, the attempt to converse with the taciturn guide. At the fort Lucien and his companion remained over night before starting back to the lonely cattle ranches whence they had been taken by the captain as guides. A mail had just arrived and several New York papers were within his reach. The impulse to read and see what was going on in the great world from which he had fled was irresistible. Lying in the strong sunlight, his head pillow'd on his saddle, his long black hair and beard and the wide hat almost burrying his face, he read the headings of the articles and scanned the telegraphic news with a dim, half-formed wish that he might see something with a familiar look. Thoughts of the old life came crowding into his mind, and he read with feverish interest the scraps of news. At last his eye caught an article headed thus:

### A STRANGE STORY.

### A LARGE FORTUNE LEFT BY AN ALLEGED MURDERER AND FORGER.

From the — Star.

Application was made yesterday in the probate court for letters of administration of the estate of one Lucien Melroy Strange, said to be deceased and intestate. The application is made by Forney W. Choate, who is brother-in-law of deceased. The estate amounts to over \$200,000.

The history of young Strange, to whom this property belonged, is a continuous record of crime. His father died when he was young, leaving him in charge of his mother, who was passionately fond of him, and spoiled her boy, as many mothers do, by being over indulgent. When she died her son produced a will leaving nearly the whole of her property to him, but Forney W. Choate, his brother-in-law, was the custodian of the true will, which divided the estate between young Strange and his sister. The wills were tested in the court, and Choate's will was established and by inference the other one declared a forgery.

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## STORY.

BY AN ALLEGED  
FORGER.

yesterday in the  
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Foiled in his attempt to defraud his sister and her husband, he left the town, refusing to touch the share which was rightfully his. It was invested for him by the trustees after lying in the bank for years, and is now nearly a quarter of a million dollars. After leaving here he went to Canada, graduated in medicine, married the belle of the village where he settled, broke her heart with his violence and abuse, robbed his father-in-law of a large sum, murdered a man named Peter Klimmer, because he had struck him once in a drunken brawl, and fled. Retribution, however, came quickly, and the very night of the murder the cowardly assassin was struck dead by lightning while escaping through the woods, and burned to a cinder. The awful news of her husband's crime and tragic end killed Strange's wife, and thus left the estate in its present condition. The application was made very quietly, and it was by merest chance that the Star reporter got hold of the facts, as the family is a very old and honorable one, and feel keenly the disgrace which has been brought on their name by the young scallawag, who died three years and a half ago.

As Lucien read, he shoved his hat back on his head and rubbed his eyes, as if to awaken himself from a dream. He a "murderer!" Dolly dead! His scoundrelly brother-in-law trying to get hold of his estate! His brain, benumbed by the force of the news, could not grasp at first any one point. Dolly's death began to picture itself in his mind, and turning prone on his face, he lay upon the ground, his head resting on his arms. Night came and his Sioux companion asked him to have something to eat, but was roughly shaken off. At last he rose to his feet, and strode up and down the little parade ground. Dolly was dead, and it was no longer a kindness to her for him to conceal the fact that he was alive. He would go and keep his brother-in-law from seizing the money—And be arrested for murder!—was the awful thought which flashed through his mind. He must go back and clear his reputation from that blot! "Perhaps," thought he, "it may be like the forgery case, and I will be hung for a crime of which I am innocent." Stopping in his hurried walk, he called the Sioux and bade him saddle the horses. He had determined to go back to Fellersburg and hunt down the murderer of Peter Klimmer. He must free his name from that stigma, and then he would see that his smart brother-in-law was not permitted to touch a cent of the money which he coveted.

He had no sooner made this resolve than he hurried to the captain's quarters. "Captain," he said, "You desired to be friendly with me and I refused. I regret of my refusal, for now I need a friend."

"All right, old fellow," cried the captain, good-naturedly, "I'm glad you've softened down; what can I do for you?"

"You remember the ranch where you met me up on the Little Horse river? Well that is mine, and I have three or four thousand dollars' worth of stock there. I have taken a sudden notion to go back to my home in the east and I want money. I will give you a bill of sale on my stock and stuff for a thousand dollars, and if I come back I'll square it with you and good interest besides; if I never come back it will be yours and there'll be a couple of thousand dollars to pay you for your trouble."

"I haven't got that much money, but I'll borrow it from the post trader and you can give him the bill of sale. As far as I'm concerned, I wouldn't be afraid to lend you my commission on your word—I believe in you."

Lucien thanked him, and an hour later was riding down the trail which, in two days, crossed the upper Missouri. There he sold his horse and trappings, and ten days later he was in Chicago, closeted with a clever detective. He told his story, and wanted a good man to go with him and work up the case. The detective feared that it would be too late to get any clues, but agreed to try it for a week or ten days, and by that time he could tell where the lines lay.

In a warm June afternoon two hard-looking tramps left the railway line which now passes within two miles of Fellersburg. They were dusty, ragged and uncouth, and as they trudged along the pike, the taller one occasionally motioned with with his hand towards a farm house or road, which seemed to be familiar. At the cross-roads they stood for a moment looking at each other and arranging a meeting later on. The short, heavy set fellow had a yellowish, stubby beard of a week's growth, and was apparently a town bred youth who had taken to the road. He was a detective with a good connection, and was wearing for the present the name of Bob Ryan.

In his companion no one could have recognized the clean shaven school-master or the well dressed doctor of four years ago in the shambling figure with the long, unkempt hair, the matted whiskers carefully tied so as to distort the face, the sore-looking eye with the strip of plaster over the lid, and its mate, covered by a green shade, the round shoulders and high, humpy back, from which his neck and head projected like a turtle's. As he walked an artificial lameness made him deviate to one side, and gave him a crab-like progress. His voice had been changed by a string stretched between his teeth,

and in the ragged, wheezy tramp who sidled up to Jo Felder's gate that soft June evening not a trace was left of Lucien Strange, except the steady questioning gleam of the eye that looked sore, but which blazed with a consuming fire.

How well he remembered the night he first came there, when Jo said: "This is my Dolly," and how often he had told his wife in the early days of their married life that he loved her then. Ay, he loved her now! Dead! Poor girl! so sweet and loving, but weak and inconstant! He could see the bedroom window out of which he looked night after night, while asking himself, "Does she love me?" The scene came back to him, and leaning his arms on the fence and burying his face in his hands, he wept. The yellow moonlight, the gleaming river, the pines on the hill, the deep green of the orchard, the dusty road leading over the bridge into the village, his vision of Dolly robed in white as she sat with him on the rustic seat by the stream! He sobbed aloud and the great hot tears rolled between his fingers over the greasy coat-sleeve resting on the fence. But now! He did not hear the baby feet of little Mayde as she climbed upon the inside of the fence, and with her face directly opposite to and within six inches of the dusty tramp, whose tears were flowing so freely.

"Do'n nobody like oo?" queried Mayde, coaxingly, in his ear.

The tramp started back, his eye gleaming strangely as he stared at the little girl on the fence. She too, alarmed by his tangled hair and whiskers, and his distorted face, leaned away from him, her black eyes dilated and gazing intently at him.

"Oo ain nasty man, is 'oo?" she inquired fearfully.

"No, I'm not a nasty man, though many people think I am!" he answered in his strange, wheezing voice.

"Oo dot a bad told, e'matter 'ov 'oor talk?" cried Mayde, quietly slipping down from the fence in order to get away from her new acquaintance.

The reference to his voice recalled his disguise, and he coaxingly called Mayde to tell him her name, assuring her that he was old and sick, and would not hurt her. "What's 'our name?" she questioned suspiciously.

"Big Antoine," he answered slowly. "What is yours?"

"Mayde Melroy St'ange," cried the little girl, who had retreated several paces from the fence and was watching him with the grave inquisitiveness of a grown woman.

"What?" gasped the tramp.

"Mayde Melroy St'ange; I tol' the once!"

Lucien clung to the fence with both hands or he would have fallen, so dim and faint was he. He saw the look of his own mother in the little baby face before him.

"Where's your mamma?"

"In e house, an' grandpa too. If nassy man ev tum out an' dit oo!" answered Mayde, retreating a little further.

"Where's your papa?" The wheezy voice sounded like a sob.

"It isn't 'papa,' its 'poppie,'" she corrected, gravely. "E's dead. E's 'the' bein' poppie, dreat bid man. E's dead an' pu'st away in 'e dround," whispered Mayde, in the solemn way in which the story had always been told her.

He fumbled along the fence for the stick stick he used as a cane, and holding one should the boards with one hand and his cane with the other he crept away, his bandaged Antoine assumed to make his disguised garb pass the man and his awful faintness almost overpowering him. He couldn't think his brain was whirling and his heart was beating violently; he felt sick, and yet the feeling was half joyous. Above all, he must get away, he must hide while Jo, as thought of what he had heard. At the bottom of the hill he sank down upon the grass by the river, and as it had grown there to his fashion, lay upon his face, his hands pressing against his eyes. "Mayde Melroy Strange!" Could it be possible? Often before he had heard of Dolly Jo while death, he had thought of the possibility and wondered if it had come to pass that Dolly had a baby?

"And Dolly still alive!" Then the awful tale he had read was not true. Perhaps Peter Klimmer had not been murdered and the newspaper story was not true?

"What's the matter with ye?" claimed Jo Felder's hearty voice, as the old man bent over the prostrate tramp.

"Aye sick?"

Lucien's heart almost stopped beating as he heard that familiar tone. He did not answer lest he betray himself. He feared no disguise would hide his identity from his honest father-in-law. He cringed like a culprit and a sneak when the old man touched his shoulder.

"He told Mayde he was sick, Pappo and then she said he staggered off 'de here," said Dolly, who, with Mayde in her arms, was watching Jo's efforts to lift the tramp from the ground.

"E's only dot one eye, ain'd 'e, Mayde?" Mayde remarked, as Jo forced the tramp into a sitting posture. Dolly's voice had completely unnerved him, and

y Stange; I tol' the sight of her seemed to rob him of every sense except that of sight.

"He's either drunk or hevin' a fit!" grumbled Jo.

He saw the look of it. "He's a pal of mine; I'll take care of him," exclaimed a low voice from behind Dolly.

Bob Ryan had arrived on the scene, and none too soon. "He got hurt

month or so ago, an' takes dizzy spells; he'll be all right by morning."

There was nothing of dizziness in the eyes which gleamed from beneath Antoine's matted hair. Its steady, feverish

its 'poppie,'" she made Dolly tremble and hide her face

"E's dead. E's 'dead behind little May. Bob took hold

man. E's dead an' pris' of his pal's arm and helped him

" whispered May, to his feet. Antoine staggered, which the story had

er. a soh, g the fence for the b' skirt. He halted and leaned against Bob's

ane, and holding on shoulder, gazing into the beautiful pitying

the hand and his face. Bob dragged him forward, but still

eft away, his bandage. Antoine turned his head and gazed back

is disguised garb, the pure and lovely face of Dolly and

ful faintness almost the little dark baby, who looked so like

He couldn't think his mother.

irling and his here. "We'd better take him up t' the ker-

he feit sick, and you're barn and let him lay down for a

lf joyous. Above a spell, an' we'll git him suthin' t' eat," said

he must hide while Jo, as he grasped Antoine's other arm and

had heard. At the helped him along.

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unnerved him, an

per for the tramps; her hands began to tremble as a gleam of hope flashed into her mind, but as her hands shook the plates rattled, and Bob Ryan sprang up and approached as if to seize her.

"I—I—I've brought some supper to ye!" she stammered, reaching forward the pan toward Bob and striving to get a glance at Antoine.

Her honest and anxious face betrayed her, and Bob, seizing her wrist, hissed savagely:

"You've been listening."

"I—I heard him say something, and I listened, for I thought mebbe it was the doctor come back."

Antoine had raised himself up on his elbow, and the light from the dirty web-covered window, streaming into the dark barn, made his face stand out like a silhouette, no one feature distinct, yet the contour of forehead and nose, and the poise of the head almost perfect.

"It is him!" cried Janet, starting forward, but Bob's hand on her wrist held her back.

"Yes, Janet, it's me, come back to get hung!" wheezed Antoine.

"Shut up, fool," cried Bob, angrily, "or you will be hung sure enough."

"Never, if it's me that's left to say the word!" snapped Janet, wrenching free her hand, and rushing over to Antoine. But Bob followed her, and while the honest Scotchwoman held the hand that had soothed the last hours of little Cripple, the detective spoke rapidly and imperatively.

"Go back to the house this moment, and say nothing—not a syllable, and make no sign if you do not want to ruin your friend. I'm a detective, and we are here trying to find out who did kill the old man, and if you breathe a sound of it, the task is hopeless. This man is innocent, but if you whisper even to his wife that he is alive, he is ruined. Meet us to-night somewhere—come here and be told the rest; be silent and all will be well; say a word, and you spoil all."

Bob gave Janet a rough shake as he concluded, but even the sturdy Janet did not resist it; she was looking tenderly at the distorted face before her.

"I'll no breathe a word," she promised.

"Then go to the house or your absence will be noticed. Come back here at midnight!" cried Bob, shoving her toward the door.

Janet walked like one in a dream, and as she left the barn almost ran into the arms of Jo Felder, who, having finished his supper, was going to see how the tramps were making out.

"Ye look frightened, woman," exclaimed Jo, "have the men scared ye?"

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### A TRAMP IS A PHILOSOPHEK.

Antoine was made comfortable on some horse-blankets and bags in the barn, and he and his partner were given supper by Janet, who slipped quietly in the side door and approached them from behind as Bob was whispering earnestly to his companion, who had completely lost all control of himself:

"You'll give yourself dead away if you don't stop this fuss—and run your head into a rope like enough."

"Oh, my God, it was Dolly. She's

alive, alive, and has a baby! Oh, my

God! my God! how I love her! Bob!

I'd give the rest of my life just to touch

her hand and know that she loved me

once, even if she has forgotten me now.

Oh, Dolly! Dolly!" sobbed the strange

wheezy, choking voice.

For a moment longer Janet stood hold-

ing the pan in which were plates and sup-

"No! no! its the mangled look of the poor lad that's breakin' me heart!" trein-  
ulously answered Janet, hurrying away.

Hearing voices, Bob forced his companion to commence his repast, and Jo found them eating when he entered. The weather was warm, and Jo threw open the big doors and seated himself for a long talk. He had always considered the tramp a philosopher, and liked to hear the ragged wanderer tell his story. In Bob he found a treasure, and for two hours the detective romanced about himself and companion in a way that made Jo love them both. Bob said they were very dear friends—Antoine and he—and wanted to get work near together. They had wandered far in company, and would always be pals. Gradually the skilful Bob drew Jo out and had him asking questions concerning every conceivable subject; and at length Jo paused after describing the murder of Peter Klimmer by a tramp, and the awful death of his son-in-law, who was innocent though suspected. Jo ventured to inquire if tramps as a rule had any religion, and this drew forth a description of the sermons Bob had heard, with every now and then a laughing comment from Jo or a reprimand when Bob went too far.

"Say, what makes men tramps, any-  
how?" queried Jo.

"Despair," answered Bob, who spoke not from experience, but with knowledge gained from a study of the genus tramp. "When a poor, homeless devil, without any home tie, becomes convinced that there is nothing but scant bread to be gained by working, if he has a lively imagination and a contempt for conventionalities he goes on a tramp. Once started as a member of the great fraternity of homeless wanderers, he finds it pleasant and without a care. The ordinary tramp is a fellow full of humor and imagination and philosophy. He can see fun in the fear shown by the housewife when she gives him something to eat, to propitiate him and not have her building burned down; he imagines that by-and-by he will strike something good and quit tramping, and his philosophy teaches him to be reckless of the morrow and careless of the end which comes at best without him calling for it or being able to ward it off. Society asks too much of its members, and thereby makes hypocrites and tramps, prostitutes and profligates, who either refuse to do anything or be anything, or else pretend to be what they are not and what no man can be—an honest man who breathes dishonest air."

"Say!" ejaculated Jo, "you talk mighty well for a—a—"

"Tramp!" continued Bob, serenely,

"call me what you will, but my friend and I are simply looking for work. We are not idlers. It is our custom to move sharp every month or so, but still we work our way and steal nothing, not because it is so wrong to steal, but because it is so pleasant to go to jail."

Jo was pleased by Bob's honest talk, and hired him for a month. "I can't stay here less Andy gets a job, too," said Ryan.

"He can git one easy enough. Mal Whitefoot's bin enquirin' for a man to do chores, an' Malon Klimmer was askin' me yesterday if I knew of a man he could send. If he can't find work, I'll fix him in a month anyhow," Jo promised, as he turned and walked away.

At midnight Janet stole into the bushes and sat on the door-sill while Bob Ryan made her promise to be wise and use nothing. Andy said little, but she reached out both her hands and clasped him, begged him not to think evil of Dolly.

"Do not speak of her, Janet. She honored me, and though I loved her, I fled that she might be free. I don't want her to know I'm alive! Let her be a widow to love whom she pleases."

"Why, mon, you're crazy. Dolly could love only one but you, and for the four years she's cried her eyes out for you. Janet's voice rose with her earnestness and her Scotch accent increased proportionately. She loved Lucien, but she couldn't hear Dolly slandered."

Lucien laughed in his harsh way, and his disguised voice made it sound doubtful.

"Oh, doctor! doctor!" pleaded Janet, her Scotch accent softening, "dinner's so cruel; she loves yer memory and we nights that ye dead. Nor will she believe evil of ye, and tells the baby how good her pappie was."

"Say no more, I know she was false," Janet.

"She was no such thing," interrupted Janet.

"Shut up," interposed Bob sharply. "I'll look into all these things, for I'm going to work here, and Andy can come often and see me—he's going down to Klimmer's or Climers, or what is it? you go to bed and hold your tongue, no mind ye."

"It's no hard fer me to do that, as seem to be thinking, but I dinna want have the poor boy thinkin' she was f— when I know that she wasn't, and 'deed—"

"Go to bed," cried Bob, giving Janet a shove. "Talk of it to-morrow."

#### CHAPTER XL

##### "LAME ANDY'S" EXPERIENCE.

"Don't call yourself 'Big Antonio,' Say your name is 'Lame Andy,' and I

will, but my friends tend to be half-witted. You'll see more king for work. We and hear more than if you seem to be our custom to move sharp. At night see who goes and comes, but still we work and take the bandages off your legs so you are, not because we can follow those you can't recognize." But because it is seen. So Bob Ryan counselled Andy as he

"Bob's honest talk started next morning for Klimmer's to truth. "I can't stay seem silly, and don't get excited, now, too," said Ryan.

"I'm a man," cried Bob in farewell. The in- is easy enough. Ingenious devices by which the detective quirin' for a man to had changed Lucien's appearance de- Klimmer was askin' for nothing on the wearer's pres- of a man he could presence of mind and self-possession. Bob had work, I'll fix him ter learned that no one can always remember o promised, as he and watch both words, actions and appear- et stole into the busi- exposure by every art known to the craft, s-ill while Bob Ryan "Lame Andy" went towards Klim- to be wise and when he walked through the village and d little, but she read past the school-house. A knot of boys d and clasped his hand at the gate and silently watched think evill of Dolly, him approach. He recognized some of her, Janet. She'd them as children who learned their letters though I loved her at his knee, and wondered if they would be free. I don't know him. As he passed them in the ve! Let her be fridelong, crab-like fashion he had assumed pleasure."

are crazy. Dolly com-pulse rose within him, and he stopped out you, and for the and glared at the boys.

"Say! Look at the mud-turtle," cried with her earnest- ent increased prop- vved Lucien, but a slandered.

"More like a crab," cried another. "Ay ye ridin' or goin' atoot," inquired third.

"He's ridin' one leg an' carryin' the

made it sound dou- ther," jeered a fourth.

The tram drew himself up, and the actor!" pleaded Jane. "A curious look from the much-plastered eye softening, # "dinner was warning enough to the elder boys, her memory and we- dead. Nor will she tell the baby he s."

know she was false- h thing," interrupt- erposed Bob sharp- these things, for and Andy can com- —he's going down- or, what is it—old your tongue, u-

me to do that, as but I dinna want hinkin' she was fa- e wasn't, and d'eed Bob, giving Jane to-morrow."

"What's the matter with yer, Said ? Who've ye got there?"

"Lame Andy, pleasee sair. Talk-a Franz mooth bettair." The excitement, the cord in his mouth, and the attempt to imitate the French dialect produced a queer effect. Malon looked sharply at the grotesque figure, and, turning to Sadie, crowed, "Give it authin' t' eat."

Lame Andy's blood boiled, but he simply bowed and barked out, "Had-a breakfast-a. Want-a work!"

Malon was fond of having fools and drunken people around him. They would

stand his abuse and work for next to nothing, and on a pinch could be pushed into doing three days' work in one. As he scanned the crooked but sturdy muscles of Lame Andy he decided to hire him. The burly frame showed power, and the French accent and idiotic manner indicated the amount of ignorance necessary to make a man forget himself and be a slave.

"How much do you want, Andy?" enquired Malon in bluff, off-hand style.

"Had brake-fast-a. Want-a work."

"How much do you want a month?—and me board ye."

"Ten dolla. Can't work-a moch for two, tree week; got sore leg; affa that all ite."

"All right, Andy, you can stay. Where's your valise?" Malon asked, with a coarse laugh.

"I'm-a clean; no valice on-a me-wash-a mooth al' time-a," wheezed Andy.

"All right, you fool; you can attend to the chores for awhile, and then you'll have to fax'round. Understand?"

"Oui, monsieur. I pull-a ze fax ven'se is ripe."

Turning angrily to Sadie, Malon snorted, "Keep this thing around the house for a while, and make him help till you get a girl. You needn't be afraid of him; he's only got half sense, and he's French enough to know how to work."

With this Malon sauntered out, and Andy watched him go to the barn and down the cellar-way. In a few minutes he returned to the house, and he detected the smell of whisky and the shape of a big bottle in Malon's pocket. Sadie looked reproachfully at her brother, probably for having given her a tramp as kitchen help, but Malon, ever ready to take offence, snarled out as he offered the bottle to his sister. "Take a drink your-self, and don't look so damn mournful. It's good fer old maids like you an' me!"

"You'd better look out or your new help will tell what you do, and get you put out of the church," whispered Sadie, sharply.

"Never, my dear, while I have anything to give away, whisky or no whisky, depend on that; the fool can't hear us anyway!"

With these cynical remarks, Malon swaggered up stairs. By-and-bye he came down and strolled toward Mrs. Whitefoot's. Sadie was embarrassed by the ugly-looking customer, who sat and watched her so sharply, and anxious to get rid of him, said:

"Go out and hunt some eggs—look in all the barns on the other side of the road, too!"

Detective Ryan had told Andy to watch

Malon as much as possible, and Sadie's orders permitted him to go and stand sentry over the dark browed Malon. Slipping out without a word, Andy entered a long shed and, dodging out on the other side, crossed the road and located himself in the barn, which faced the back part of Whitefoot's house. He did not know why he watched, except that he had been told to. The green shade was lifted from his eye, and as he peered through a crevice in the boards, he saw some one come out on the half closed porch at the back of the house. It was Malon and 'Rene Watson—she kissed Malon. He wondered if the Watsons had moved. It was evident that Malon and 'Rene were on very intimate terms, though the man shoved the woman away as if he were weary of her caresses.

When Malon started homeward Andy, with his hat full of eggs, was sidling into the house. "What ye bin doin, Humpey?" he demanded.

"Finda lo sig, monsieur," answered the tramp, meekly.

"After dinner go over to that house there," pointing to Whitefoot's, "and split some wood and do whatever the woman tells ye." As Malon watched Andy lurching out of the house he broke into a laugh, and called after him, "Mind now ye don't try to flit with the woman across the road. She'll likely try to catch you, too."

An hour later Andy stood on the back porch of Whitefoot's house, talking in broken English to the splendidly formed woman, who was idly rocking to and fro reading a novel. "Monsieur Klimnaire send-a me for do-a work for madame," barked Andy, with a polite bow.

"Well he has sent me a beauty, to be sure—almost as pretty as he described 'Rene remarked to herself, half aloud. Andy heard her but made no sign.

"What makes you walk so funny?" inquired 'Rene, who was glad to have some one beside her sister to talk to, her exceeding mature husband being absent on some cattle business in a distant city.

"Fell-a train; gott-a laiga smash-a all ope."

"Did that 'smasha' your voice 'all ope,' too?" continued 'Rene.

"Oui, madame," Andy answered, shortly, raising his one visible eye and looking 'Rene full in the face. As he looked at her he remarked to himself that she had changed but little since the night he stood with her at the gate and the tear tickled the back of his hand. She was larger and her eyes were bolder and her clothes were richer, otherwise she was the 'Rene' Watson

whom he had kissed at the gate. A cynical laugh came with the memory, but the discordant sound of his own voice recalled his position. It alarmed 'Rene, who saw the look of recognition and heard the grating laugh without being able to guess their meaning.

"Did you bring an axe—ours is broken?" she asked.

"No madame, monsieur say noting of ze ex!"

"Oh, he didn't, sh; I guess he doesn't like the looks of an axe very much!"

"I go-a beek por ze ex?" interrogated Andy.

"Yes, you'd better, and you'll find the wood in the shed there. Split enough wood to last three or four days, and then I'll give you something else to do!"

Andy hobbled back after the axe. No one was in sight as he drew near the house, and he had no idea where the axe was to be found. No one was in the kitchen as he peered through the door, but he could hear voices up stairs. Slipping into the room he opened the door leading upstairs, and could distinctly hear what was being said:

"I can't stand it Malon, and I won't. You are drinking again, worse than ever, and talked before that tramp as freely as if you had nothing to hide—"

"Shut up I tell ye—say nuthin' 'bout that—"

"I'm not going to say anything about it, but you'll betray it to more than me if you ever get delirium tremens again, and perhaps they won't keep the secret as well as I have."

"What if I do? They can't prove it," answered Malon thickly.

"You don't know, Malon! You can't tell when some detective will get a clue or something. Maybe that very tramp you hired is one, and you went and said things before him as if he couldn't hear."

"I won't any more Said, I'll take care. Oh, yes, I will! Nev'mine me! 'm solid 'm all soun'," concluded Malon in a drunken, cajoling tone. Andy could hear the door close behind Sadie, and he slipped out of the kitchen as quickly and quietly as he could. Five minutes afterwards he knocked at the kitchen door and asked Sadie where he could get an axe.

Sadie was crying when he spoke to her, and starting in fear from Andy, retreated towards the woodshed door. Andy, anxious to have her trust him, exclaimed in his wheezing, barking tone:

"Mam'zelle not needa be afraida Lam Andy. I nevar harm anyting."

Nothing could disguise the honest sincerity of the words, and Sadie looked at him for a moment, catching the steady

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nd Sadie looked at

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gleam of the much be-plastered eye, and then with a sigh of relief, answered:

"You'll find an axe in the woodshed. What do you want it for?"

"Ze bossa tell me split wood for la madame across ze road, ana she have no ex."

"Oh," exclaimed Sadie, "tell her that your boss has one of his spells."

Andy did as he was told, and before beginning work knocked at the door, and Mrs. Whitefoot appearing, he bowed and said:

"Mam'zelle tella me for tella you zat monsieur have von oov heez 'spails.'"

'Rene hardly understood the message, and inquired:

"Who do you mean, and what do you mean by 'spails'?"

"Mam'zelle not explaina noting. She say ze monsieur have von oov heez 'spails.'"

For half an hour Andy worked hard in the woodshed, listening, however, for a sign that 'Rene had gone over to Klimmer's. At last he heard the door slammed, and watching through a crack he saw 'Rene hurrying across the road. He tapped softly at the back door, then sharply, but no answer. He tried the door; it was unlocked, and in he walked. The instinct of a detective is born in men, and Andy had it. He had always been trying to find out facts and motives, and now he was thrice anxious to reach the bottom of the mysterious intimacy between 'Rene and Malon. A writing desk was on the table of the sitting room, and Andy, seizing it, seated himself by a window where he could watch for Mrs. Whitefoot's return. A letter with the Buffalo postmark informed his "dear wife" that Jonas Whitefoot would not be home until Monday night, when he would expect her to meet him at the station. A very prettily written but half-finished note, addressed to her "darling," related the fact that "the old man" would not be home until Monday night, and she would expect him (her darling) to see her often in the meantime. Andy guessed that this note was for Malon, and was seeking for further information when he noticed 'Rene starting homeward. This concluded his search, and when the false wife returned she found Andy splitting wood with a violence which was considerably out of proportion to what had been accomplished.

"This sort of thing seems to run in the Watson blood," he thought, as he toiled. "I suppose Dolly used to send similar little notes to Tommy when I was likely to be away." This thought enraged him. Never since his sickness had he felt the flood of revenge for his dishonor stream

through his veins as it did then. How he would like to kill Tommy Watson! At any rate he would expose 'Rene, and make her hilarious brother feel the shame which a woman can bring! Yes, he would show to the world what the Watson breed was like, and then he could meet Tommy face to face, and spit upon him and beat him, and then he could kill him, and—"

As he thought his blood boiled, and he threw a heavy block of wood to the floor with a sounding crash. Looking up to see that other blocks were not displaced by the disturbance, he saw 'Rene watching him with most interested eyes. She startled Andy for an instant, and then he drew himself up to denounce her, forgetting in his passion every lesson Bob Ryan had taught him.

"I know-a of what-a you've done," he began, but again his own voice frightened him. He could not speak intelligibly, and leaning his hands on the axe, he gazed at her in silence his perspiring face purple, and his eye speaking the rage his tongue refused to express.

"What did you say?" she asked, half frightened.

Andy was himself again. He saw his error, and in the same quick, disjointed way enquired, "How-a t'ink you I getta on wiz-a wood?"

'Rene was satisfied, but as she sat in her room, thinking of the swoilen, drunken face of Malon Klimmer, she recalled Andy's strange conduct and wondered what it meant.

## CHAPTER XL

### ANDY REPORTS PROGRESS.

At six o'clock the other hired men from Malon's farm came in for supper and they were much surprised to see the lame and repulsive tramp helping Sadie do the household work, and they were beginning to wink and laugh, when they caught the ugly look in the maimed eye, and Andy, as an exhibition of strength, with one hand lifted one of the men, chair and all, so as to make room for himself.

"Where's t' boss?" growled one of the men.

"Sick," answered Sadie, avertting her face.

"Oh, he is, is he? D'ye reckon he's too sick to say if he wants the peas sowed t'morrer 'er not?"

"He won't say a word about anything, so just leave him alone till morning," counselled Sadie.

Andy heard her words as he sat eating his supper and resolved to go up to Fellersburg. He would tell Sadie he was going, but if she refused he would go at

any rate. All day long Dolly's face had haunted him; the baby's eyes were his mother's, and surely little Mayde must be his own. His own, his baby, his own little baby girl: he would have her then, she was his! He had decided, and down came his fist on the table. The hired help looked startled, and Sadie, tired and down hearted, gazed at him with a sigh. Rising from the table he piled up the dishes and helped wash them. It almost made Sadie laugh to see the scrupulous pains he took that every dish should be clean, but she began to trust the ungainly object who was her "servant girl," for the time being. He said;

"I wanna go ope por ze villaige whain I getta done ze woort!"

"All right, Andy! You can go now, Sadie answered, kindly.

"Sanks! Sanks," and with that Andy was off. It was nearly sundown when he again leaned over the fence in front of Jo Felder's white farm-house, and watched for little Mayde, Dolly or his partner.

Bob Ryan, with the little girl on his shoulder, came out for a run, and Andy, pushing open the gate, demanded Mayde from his friend.

"Mommie said 'oo was a tamp, ap' if Mayde p'aid 'ith tamps dey'd 'un off 'ith her."

Andy had clutched Bob Ryan's arm and was holding him while he begged the little girl to come to him.

"Go to him, Mayde; he won't hurt you," said Bob, as he lifted her onto Andy's shoulder. "Grab hold of his hair and hang on."

May was no coward, and burying her little fists in Andy's long black hair, she cried, "Un now, 'un fast!"

Andy ran around the orchard, up and down the lane, down to the river and up the hill, and whenever his sidelong steps grew slow, his merciless driver cried: "'Un, 'oo nasty man, 'un. If oo doan, I do toudder man."

The fear that she would cry or leave him made him wild. With labored breath and limbs that trembled under him, he galloped and frisked, all the time grasping the little knees which were over his shoulders. Dolly, standing on the veranda, watched her little daughter's cruelty in making Andy run, and wondered at the lame man's patience and self-sacrifice.

"Mayde! Come here to mommie!" she cried, and Andy, his breath coming hoarse and with a panting wheeze that frightened Dolly, cantered up and tenderly lifted May over to Jo, who was standing by.

"Why, Mayde," cried her mamma, reprovingly, "you should not make the

poor lame man run with you like that; it hurt him."

"He 'aunted to, mommie," she cried, with a rising inflection on the last syllable which was always intended by the imperious baby as not only the last word, but the last sound in every argument in which she was concerned.

"Never mind, I lika ze baby," Andy interposed, as he leaned against the veranda, almost unable to move. His distress stirred Dolly's compassion. That he had wearied himself in carrying Mayde was a great recommendation, but that he liked to do it and liked the baby settled the matter in Andy's favor. With some of her old coquetry blended with a consciousness which Andy resented, she touched his shoulder and told him to sit down and rest. With an angry gesture he jerked his shoulder away, and motioning Bob Ryan to follow, he turtled off toward the barn, feeling with every step the humiliation of being unable, by reason of his disguise, to walk erect and shame Dolly's patronage.

It was midnight when they parted. The big yellow moon was sinking behind the pine-clad hill before Andy had related every word he had heard and described every movement he had seen. "Tell me again what Malon Klimner said 'To his sister and what she said to him; tell me slow, so as to make no mistake, and give me no opinion of your own."

In return Bob said but little. His interview with Janet and his talks with Jo and Mrs. Felder were summarized into a few words, but Andy was still unsatisfied.

"What do you think of her? Do you think she is a good woman now?" he inquired, hoarsely.

"Yes, and always has been. Either you are insane now, or were then, if you imagine she was untrue to you."

"But I know she was false. I saw them together in my room the night I left her. That cannot be explained or argued away. If she is behaving herself now I am thankful for the baby's sake but I must have the baby. It is the image of my dead mother," and he spoke slowly, as if talking to himself.

"See here," said Bob, sharply, "I came here to get at the bottom of Klimner's murder, and if you begin any fun business over your wife and baby you'll be jailed, and the jig will be up at once. You must either do as I tell you or I'll back to Chicago to-morrow!"

"I have done as you told me, and am ready to obey your orders now," answered Andy sadly. "You don't know the agony I suffer when I see my wife and baby as I think of my shame and dishonor."

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you hear a sound get up and listen. I will  
visit you to-morrow night. Go now!"

Andy hobbled away in deep bitterness  
of spirit. His pride he felt was being  
broken by this degrading service, even  
though he was doing it for his honor's  
sake; he had become a servant, his false  
wife had touched his shoulder condescend  
ingly as if he were a dog; his baby had  
ridden on his neck as she would on a quiet  
plow horse, and now he was going to spy  
at the keyholes of the house which gave  
him shelter, and on the man whose bread he  
was eating. The bandages on his leg chafed  
and he leaned in utter despair against  
the trunk of a tree, which spread its  
dense foliage over the wayside and shaded  
the little gate leading up to the front door  
of Jonas Whitefoot's house. Across the  
way he could see a light burning in Malon  
Klimmer's room. How he hated himself!  
How much better it had been if he had  
never seen the story in the newspaper  
about Dolly's death at Peter Klimmer's  
murder. He had been finding peace and  
forgetfulness, but now the passion and  
shame of the past were again overwhelming  
him.

While buried in these hateful thoughts  
he heard a slight noise and from the darkness  
of his shelter saw an elderly man  
climb cautiously over the fence near by  
and slip along the edge of the orchard to  
ward the house. His movements were  
secret and mysterious, and Andy at once  
decided to follow him. The stranger  
walked cautiously around the house and  
listened at the windows. No sound could  
be heard; the woodshed door was opened  
and then in a few moments closed again,  
as the man came out and directed his  
steps to a small building, probably a  
granary, which he unlocked and entered.  
In a few moments the little window  
in the gable of the granary was opened  
and a face appeared. For an hour Andy  
lurked in the orchard, but still he could  
see the indistinct outlines of the face at  
the granary window. Someone was evi  
dently on watch; probably old man  
Whitefoot was trying to find out how his  
young wife acted in his absence! This  
idea satisfied Andy and he went to his  
bed, determined to see the result on the  
morrow.

Next morning Malon was almost sober.  
He gave orders to his men in sullen and  
peremptory tones, and then told Andy to  
saddle his horse. As he rode away, Andy  
watched him, taking special note of the  
conversation he had with 'Rene at her  
gate. In the afternoon 'Rene came over  
to chat with Sadie, and Andy watched to  
see the face reappear in the granary win  
dow. He had not long to wait; the  
granary door opened and someone stepped

quietly into the woodshed, and though  
Andy watched till nearly dark no one came  
as an excuse to go over and see if she had  
any company, an inquiry whether she  
could give a friend of his a job. 'Rene  
was alone, looking more reckless and fas  
cinating than he could ever remember  
her.

"No, I have no work for a man," she  
said, with a laugh.

Andy was watching the bed in the next  
room, and imagined he saw the valance  
move. The suspicious husband was evi  
dently located where he could take obser  
vations.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### SOMETHING MORE IS LEARNED ABOUT THE MURDER.

When Bob Ryan came to visit his client  
at Klimmer's in the evening, Andy told  
him about the mysterious watcher, and the  
detective at once declared that it  
must be old man Whitefoot. Both men  
prepared to watch the house, and late in  
the evening Bob slipped through a window  
and secreted himself behind a book  
case in the sitting-room. Andy was out  
side guard, and was instructed to slip up  
to the window and listen should Malon  
Klimmer enter the house.

The old Dutch clock within a yard of  
Bob's ears was just striking ten when the  
latch of the back door was lifted, and in  
strode Malon Klimmer. His face had the  
heavy stolidity of the man who is always  
half drunk, and in his eyes the red gleam  
of excitement showed that something had  
aroused his displeasure.

'Rene met him with an affectionate  
jocularly which was much more than  
half assumed. He repulsed her roughly,  
and said he didn't want to be "slobbered  
over." Her face reddened with anger,  
and she leaned in silence against the  
bolted door, watching Malon as he threw  
himself into a chair by the window.

"Don't glare at me, — — — it!  
I'd rather hear yer jaw goin' than hev ye  
put on that reproachful look and try to  
do the saint bizness."

The room was warm, even with the  
opened window, closely shuttered on the  
outside, and as Malon spoke he took off  
his coat and threw it on a chair near Bob  
Ryan's hiding place. The detective heard  
a rattling of keys, and lost no time in  
going through Malon's pockets, appropri  
ating letters, keys, and a memorandum  
book, which he slipped into the bosom of  
his blouse.

'Rene made no answer to Malon's brutal  
speech, and her continued silence galled  
him.

" — — — it, say suthin': Don't stand there like a bump on a log! I came because you ast me, not that I wanted to, you kin bet yer big figger on that! Now I'm here, say yer say, and make it short!"

" I was just wondering how I came to fall in love with a brute like you—a beast without a human instinct!" replied 'Rene slowly, still contemplating the man before her.

" It's just as easy explained as how I ever come to run after an old cat like you! And your fallin' in love hain't no compliment seemin' you've lally-gagged with every feller that's been after ye for the last fifteen years or more!" Malon stretched out his burly figure and yawned out the last sneer.

'Rene had been taunted by Malon before, but never so offensively as to-night. Her hands clutched her dress and her brain swam as she swayed forward from the door and then fell back again. All day she had expected this visit, and had looked forward with pleasure to the coming of the bullying and tyrannical brute, who somehow had grown into her life and become a part of her plans. She had greeted him tenderly and had been spurned, she had loved him and her passion had been called worthless and common and had been spat upon.

Remorse comes in waves and often times staggers us. It is a combination of selfishness and cowardice which is akin to neither love nor virtue, nor a hatred of vice. It makes the heart sick, but as the basis of a good resolution it is as worthless as sand. 'Rene could see her degradation because she was spurned by even the brute she had associated with. A retrospect of her life flashed through her mind and her guilt and shame for the moment made Malon's bitter words seem deserved. It was but for a moment and then she turned savagely on her tormentor:

" You dare to taunt me, you drun' on hypocrite! You lying sneak! You sneer at me! You! You! You that murdered your own father! You—"

" Stop!" thundered Malon, springing up and seizing 'Rene by the wrist. " Some one'll hear ye."

" I don't care if they do! I saved you once, but I'll never do it again! Fool! coward that you are—" Malon's hand covered her mouth before she could say more.

" Shet uper I'll murder ye — — — Dye think I'd take chances on ye tellin' if ye had the proof! But ye hain't! And I want no talkin' an' wots more I won't hev it! Don't try to bluff me or ye'll git hurt!"

Giving her a violent shake, he was

about to release her when she bit the hand which had covered her mouth, and with a howl of pain Malon struck her a blow in the face. She staggered against the sideboard and her hand fell on the carving knife, which lay outside. Seizing it she moved threateningly toward him, her head thrust forward, her bruised face livid with rage.

" I'll cut your heart out, coward, if you ever dare lay a hand on me again!" she hissed.

" Put up that knife, or by — — I'll knock ye down and take it away from ye!" Malon warned her as he swung a chair over his head. But the burly ruffian was thoroughly frightened, and dared not begin the attack.

" I'll go to-night and tell a magistrate that you killed your father to get money to pay old Hawkins for assaulting him," cried 'Rene, fiercely.

" Yes, an' tell that your own brother got half of it, after trying to raise it by robbin' Doctor Strange," sneered Malon.

" I don't care what happens me. I'll get even with you if I get hung for it."

" No, ye wont. I say ye won't say a word, and if ye do it can't be proved, fer no one saw me do it, an' wholl take your word agin mine, if ye go out an' say what ye threat'nin' to?" You'd never known a word of it if ye hadn't been with me when I got the 'treemers,' an' how could ye explain that?" Malon spoke threateningly at first, but finally, half coaxingly, he put the chair on the floor and leaned over the back of it towards 'Rene, who stood grasping the knife, and trembling with excitement and rage.

" You can't coax or scare me now, Malon Klimmer! The time's past for all that. I've nothing left to lose, and you've got to suffer now some of the horrors you have inflicted on me." There was a premonition of hysterics in her voice, which encouraged Malon in his attempt to excuse his conduct.

" I know I done wrong," he said coaxingly, " but I was feelin' mad over the way I was used up to Felder's, and felt like spittin' it out on some one!" The flush in 'Rene's face, and the flash in her eye should have warned him that he was rousing a demon of jealousy, but the recollection of the rebuff he had received angered him and made him reckless.

" What was it?" enquired 'Rene slowly. Her lips were swollen and one eye bruised with the blow from Malon's hand, and the words seemed to burn her as she spoke. Malon was well pleased over his easy victory, and while congratulating himself on having been able to turn the subject, he felt a propor-

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fe, or by — I'll take it away from her as he swung at the burly ruffian ed, and dared not tell a magistrate other to get money or assaulting him,"

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tonate contempt for the weak souled woman who could be so easily cajoled.

"Well, ye see, when I was comin' home from town 'bout dusk—Sit down there, damn it, don't stand shakin' there as if y're ready to spring onto me and jab that knife into me—"

'Rene half sat and half leaned on the corner of the table distant from Malon, and laid the knife beside her."

"Go on."

"Well, 'bout dusk I dodged into Fel- der's task about that lame French fool that's doin' chores over the house—for an excuse ye know—an' as luck hed it I saw Dolly t'ont lookin' lovely as an angel an' as sweet an' fresh lookin' as anything. By gosh I wouldn't of refused none if she'd offered to kiss me, batcher life on that! I just wanted t' grabber and bugger, and fer a second I felt like takin' chances an' tellin' her all I felt, but the words wouldn't come. She started back, an' I trembled an' she blushed, and her eyes dropped as if she'd bin thinkin' of me an' the terrible sickness I'd gone through on account of the brash way she used me, an' I was just ready to rush in an' grab her hand when the little cub, a hangin' onto its mother's gown, commenced to holler like the devil, an' old Jo got up an' rushed at me as if I was a mad dog, an' pushed me back an' wanted to know what I was after. I sed I had a man workin' fer me that claimed t' have a pal workin' there, and I only wanted to know if it was all right and the men was a' square. He looked at me fer a minit, his danged face blacker'n the hinges of hell, an' sed he didn't want no truck 'th me ner mine, an' that I was a har an' was botherin' Dolly, an' if he caught me on the farm agin he'd fill my damn' skin with buckshot; then he slammed the door in my face, an' I got off'n that place cursed quick, now I tell ye!"

"An' served you right," muttered 'Rene.

"It did, hey? Well, by —, you needn't think I've given up tryin' t' git the young wider yet. I'm nearer gotten her now than I ever was afore, I know that! She looked sorry fer me when Jo was turnin' me out, an' I know she's bin thinkin' of me, even if she didn't come to see me when I was sick—"

"You can thank me for that. I heard you planning with Sadie and went and told Dolly every word, and you can rest assured, Malon Klimmer, if you ever get Dolly Strange, it'll be over my dead body an' because there ain't a jail strong enough to hold you!"

'Rene had slipped from her seat and was standing now, knife in hand, as she bent over the table and hissed out the words

of warning. Her face was set, there was no trace of faltering purpose in her voice or eyes. Malon had leaped to his feet when she explained how she had foiled him, but the curse stopped on his lips when he recognized the fatal mistake he had made and saw opposite him the bruised face with its grim purpose.

"I don't see why ye went an' did that," he growled, "even if I did marry the wider, it'd allus be jest the same twixt you'n me!"

"Yes, jest the same," mocked 'Rene, "but it is going to be 'jest different twixt you'n me.' You promised over two years ago to sell out and take me to the States. You're going to do it now or I'll burn every barn you've got, and the house, too; and you're going to do it quick, too, mister man. I give you to Monday noon, to hand me ten thousand dollars as a proof that you intend to leave Dolly Strange and come to the States with me. If you don't your barns have to go, and I dare you to accuse me of it if they are fired. Now, go home, and drink no more whisky to-night or you'll forget what I've told you!"

With his hand on the latch and his coat over his arm, Malon looked back at 'Rene, and there was murder in the red gleam of his smouldering eyes.

"You're crazy, woman! If you burn my barns I'll murder ye, an' then we'll be square!"

"I mean what I say, and I'll show you that I mean it if I don't have the money by Monday noon. Go!"

Without another word Malon slammed the door behind him, and the lamp was extinguished at the same moment by the draught of air. The detective was near the door, and slipped out while 'Rene was hunting for a light.

Bob found Andy, almost beside himself with excitement, still crouching beneath the window.

"Come on!" whispered Bob, pulling at Andy's sleeve, "Do you begin to see, an explanation of Tommy Watson's presence in your wife's room, now?"

"Yes! yes! I see it now, but do you think she is really beginning to yield to the suit of that scoundrel Klimmer?" cried Andy, almost choking with the conflicting emotions of joy and jealousy.

"I'm glad I'm not your wife if you believe all the empty bragging of such blackguards as you! By golly, didn't Mrs. Tenderfoot show him up good?—and she means business, too, mind that! Good night!"

Andy wanted to stay and talk, but Bob told him to go to bed, and fifteen minutes later the long black beard and matted

hair of the tramp was resting on the pillow of his bed in the little back room of Malon Klimmer's house, and sobs and tears marked the coming of tender thoughts of Dolly and repentance for his jealous suspicions. But the leopard cannot change his spots, and even yet the tormented heart of Lucien Strange had not found peace. When he thought of the possibility that Dolly was learning to like Klimmer, he sat up in the bed, his hands grasping the counterpane, and his eyes glaring with jealous fury. These attacks were few and brief, and he cursed himself for his folly, and fell asleep, dreaming that he was again being kissed by the soft lips of Dolly Felder.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## LUCIEN'S BROTHER-IN-LAW VISITS FELDERSBURG.

"How's the weather suit ye? 'Bout right, haint it? Yosit 'tis! je-e-e-sta-about right; tis begosh."

"Yes, it is very pleasant weather indeed," answered the passenger, with a polite bow.

"Tis haint it? je-e-e-sta-about bully, danged if it hain't!" added Humstir, enthusiastically. He had a communicative stranger in the seat with him, and the prospect of having a good talk cheered the proprietor of Humstir's royal mail line of one stage and a spavined team, almost as much as a couple of drinks.

"Bin over from the States long?"  
"Left there this morning! Made good time, haint I?"

"Yes, ye hev! Yes, ye hev! Danged good time, ye hev, b'gosh! Gunto make much of a visit hereabouts?"

"No; just a few days!"

"Like enough it's biznis more'n pleasure, haint it neow?"

"Yes, it is business that leads me into this out-of-the-way place, and very unpleasant business."

"No-e-o-o ? ??" ejaculated Humstir.

"Yes. To see after a widow and an orphan, or at least a woman and a baby down at Feldersburg—five miles from the end of your trip, isn't it?"

"Or thar-a-bouts. Like enough, a good five miles; guess it's all a' that. Tis b'gosh! Whose widder did ye say? Guess mebbe I didn't ketch the name? Sure I didn't, b'gosh!"

"Strange—a daughter of one Joseph Felder, I believe."

"No, not Joseph; Joe's his name. Jo, we call him. Well, I WILL be dod-swatted! An'thet's what yer after, hey? Well, neow!"

"You seem to know the family."

"Well, I should say so! Know the

family? Guess mebbe I know my own brother some little! Know the famly! Well, I should cluck right out, I do—root 'n branch, an' Strange throwed in, an'a bad git he was too, he was, b'gosh!"

Humstir was interested. He seldom struck such a bonanza as this passenger from the States, who was not only talker but was likely to afford some information concerning Dr. Strange's affairs. Humstir turned to look more closely at his companion, and found him a wiry-framed, flat-faced man, with reddish side whiskers and no moustache. It was not a striking face, even-featured, smooth and oily in expression, and withal possessing a certain ease and dignity which comes of every day contact with refined society. Forney W. Cheat was not a large man, nor small, nor was he either fat or thin; his clothing was not striking in either style or material. If you studied the make-up of the man you would wonder what made him noticeable, and yet noticeable he was. Perhaps it was his confident manner and his quick and almost obtrusively friendly bearing. He was exactly the kind of a man of whom an observant traveler would ask a question, he always seemed so sure of himself and his surroundings. Unscrupulous, insincere, almost gushing—a reader of faces would see all this at a glance—cruel, persevering and malignant, observers would say if they read him day by day.

"Gunto see after'm, hey?" repeated Humstir. "Well, I reckon they need it, I do, b'gosh."

"In what way do they need it?" inquired Cheat, turning sharply upon Humstir.

The old man was always cautious, and he reckoned he had said too much, and ought to hedge.

"Of course, I was speakin' generally like, meanin' no offence, nor nutchin' agin 'em. No, I didn't; not a thing, I didn't, b'gosh."

"I didn't ask you take anything back. I only wanted to know what you meant," enquired Cheat, with an expansive smile.

Humstir leaned over the wheel and ejected a mouthful of tobacco, and while he rubbed his mouth with the back of his hand, he glanced at his companion and settled in his mind that he was no friend of either Strange or the Felders.

"Well," he commenced, "only repeatin' what I've heerd hain't no harm to nuthin', is it neow?"

"Certainly not."

"Tain't, tain't, b'gosh. Well, I've heered, an' I guess it's nigher true than t'other way, that Jo's lost the heft of his property, an'

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hant tendin' half to what's left. Jo's  
got ter'ble spleeny lately, so he hez, he  
hez, b'gosh, an' hant like he used to was;  
an' I've heard it's on account of havin'  
signed notes for everybody and havin' t'  
pay 'em. If a man wants t' be a hell of a  
feller an' popular an' be called good-  
hearted he's gotter pay fer't, an' I gess  
that's what Jo's bin' doin', an' he's in a  
ter'ble funk 'bout what'll become of the  
young widder an' the young 'un. So I've  
he-e-erd. Hearsay hant wuth nothin'  
in court, but I reckon taint fer off in this  
trip. No, I don't; I don't, b'gosh!"

Choate listened attentively, his light  
blue eyes watching Humstir's coarse face  
and his long thin lips breaking into a  
smile, as Humstir threw in his legal pro-  
viso at the end.

"So you think being anxious to be  
known as a good-hearted fellow will re-  
sult in Felder being sold out of his farm,  
oh?"

"That's what I've heered; have,  
b'gosh."

"How long has this been going on?  
Felder's troubles I mean?"

"Six months mebbe, er a year, er a  
year-n-a-half, or thar-a-bouts, mebbe  
more." Humstir said this with the air of  
a conscientious and truthful man who  
desired to be exact.

Choate turned his back on Humstir and  
began to think. "She cannot know of  
Lucien's money, or she would have claim-  
ed it before this! No mother would let  
her child suffer or permit her father to be  
sold out if she knew where a quarter of a  
million dollars awaited her order. Likely  
Lucien had concealed his history and dis-  
grace from his wife. If so it would be  
easy to get her to sign off. If it were  
known that her husband left a fortune  
which for some reason she would not  
touch, this gossip old stage driver would  
know all about it:

"Did you ever hear anything about  
this Doctor Strange, who he was, or where  
he came from?" he enquired.

"Heered plenty. Well I should re-  
peat! Heered a thousand stories et I  
heered one! Have b'gosh. None thet I  
believed, no, sir-e-e, didn't b'gosh! Mrs.  
Felder tells thet there's heaps of money  
waitin' for the young widder et she asks  
fer't, but there hain't no way of explainin'  
why the blazes she don't ast fer't! No  
ther hain't! No way of explainin' it,  
ther hain't, b'gosh, sept some softy talk  
'bout it bein' dishonorable t' his mem'ry,  
or suthin' silly like that, but I don't count  
that nothin'—don't b'gosh, but I hev  
heered thet he got inter trouble by bigamy  
or suthin', an' havin' too many wives  
over in the States, an' thet's b'heved round

here more'n anthing else—so I've heered;  
hev, b'gosh."

Choate moved uneasily in his seat when  
he heard that there were well defined  
rumors that there was a fortune to be  
had for the asking. His long, thin  
lips were drawn tightly over the  
large teeth, and the light blue  
eyes darkened. But when he heard the  
rumors that Lucien had been married be-  
fore he smiled in a slow, mirthless way,  
and compressing his under lip between  
his teeth he straightened himself up with  
that look of definite purpose which made  
him strong. He was a methodical man  
and believed in going slowly, but with a  
well-prepared plan, every move in which  
must be studied in detail and all chances  
guarded against.

After tea Humstir's son drove Choate  
over to Fellersburg, and the village hotel  
was provided with a guest and the  
whispered information that he was a  
"Yankee lawyer." The fact that a  
Yankee lawyer was staying at the tavern,  
speedily excited comment. It was genera-  
lly decided that his visit was in con-  
nection with either Jo Felder's protested  
notes, or else Hiram Quick's patent gate.  
When late in the evening, Choate made  
enquiries and took a walk towards Jo's  
white farm house, the theory that  
Hiram Quick's useful inventions had at  
last attracted notice was abandoned and  
Jo Felder's pecuniary embarrassments  
accepted as the only possible reason for  
the lawyer's visit to Fellersburg.

The thin lips of the stranger closed  
tightly on his cigar, and the puffs of  
smoke came in faint, steady lines from  
the almost unopened mouth. A woman  
and a little girl were playing together in  
the grass under an immense apple tree,  
and as he strolled slowly past, Choate  
took a rapid survey of Dolly, deciding that  
the intense love she manifested for her  
child was her controlling passion. He  
walked past the house and barn and then  
turned back. It was almost dark now and  
his cigar was out. Throwing away the  
stump he leaned against the fence oppo-  
site Jo Felder's gate, and leisurely pre-  
pared to light another. As he held the  
lighted match before his face he heard a  
choking, half-barking exclamation, and  
saw in the darkening road a most ungainly  
sight. Laime Andy, coming to visit  
Bob Ryan, had caught sight of the law-  
yer's face and stood as if transfixed. The  
detective, standing in the shadow of the  
orchard, saw the sudden pause and heard  
the cry of astonishment made by his  
client, and fearing some foolish move on  
the part of Andy, sprang over the fence  
with the exclamation:

"Hello, chummy!"

Andy did not seem to hear the salutation; he stood trembling, his hands opening and closing and his fingers twitching nervously. Bob's heavy hand fell on Andy's shoulder, and his cheery voice called out to the stranger:

"I reckon you scared chummy here by not offering him a cigar."

"Excuse me, help yourselves," laughed Choate, who was glad to be rid of the exclusive society of the strange being before him.

"Have a cigar, Andy?" asked Bob. Andy made no answer, but roughly pushed the cigar case away from him.

"Don't want any, hey? Then I guess I'll take a couple. Thanks!" Bob said, as he helped himself to three and passed the cigar case back.

"Does Mr. Felder live in there, my friend?" inquired Choate, motioning towards the house with his cigar.

"Yes, sir," answered Bob, pulling at the arm of his companion. "Come along, Andy, I want to have a talk with you."

Andy had not spoken a word, and now he followed Bob in a dazed sort of way through the big red gate toward the barns. As they closed the gate behind them they saw Choate cross the road and enter the yard in front of the house.

"Who is that snoozer?" whispered Bob.

"What's he doing here? the infernal scoundrel. Thief, perjuror, villain!" hissed Andy.

"Who is he, Mr. Fresh? Tell me that and I'll blamed soon know what he's after."

"My sister's husband; the man who robbed me and branded me as a forger."

"Ah-h," exclaimed Bob with genuine surprise as he squatted in the grass and took off his shoes and stockings. "You'd better untie your leg, and take off your brogans. That fellow is here on business, and you and I had better know what it is!"

Andy's fingers trembled so that he could hardly rid himself of his bandages, but Bob quickly divested him of every encumbrance.

"Now mister man," whispered Bob, sternly, "I am taking you with me because I'm afraid to leave you alone, but you must keep quiet. No tragedy, now, remember! No stalking in and making a fool of yourself and me, d'y'e hear me! A bad break now will ruin everything, but if you keep still perhaps the murder and the forgery will all be cleared up at once."

Under the best of circumstances Andy hated the dictation of anybody, but Bob's continual and necessary orders grew galling.

"Go on; don't stay here teaching me.

I've shown what I can stand, and don't want to be talked to like a baby."

"You have, eh; and not ten minutes ago I had to grab you, or you would have been at your brother-in-law's throat!"

Mentally Andy had to acknowledge this, but he angrily urged Bob forward, and almost immediately they were under the open parlor window, where they saw Jo Felder placing a lighted lamp on the table.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

MARRIED, NOT WISELY, BUT TOO OFTEN.

When Jo Felder put the lamp on the parlor table on that fateful Monday night, he stood for a moment looking at his visitor in a wistful sort of way, wondering what was meant by so late a call. Dolly and her mother came in, as the stranger had expressly stated that his visit had much to do with "Mrs. Strange," and took seats near Jo, all waiting alike for the bolt which they felt was about to strike their home.

Forney W. Choate was devoted to beauty, and his weakness, he often confessed, was for women. Subtle and astute, unscrupulous and cruel in what he called "business," he always spoke softly to women, and to beauty he attuned his voice to its softest key. As he looked at the lovely Dolly, he felt his pulses quicken. He never before had seen so beautiful a woman. Her shapely, graceful figure, her soft, panay eyes and red lips, the snow-white neck and tiny curls which clustered around the great coils of hair that crowned her head, the dainty hands and muslin dress, everything impressed him, and when he spoke his words were for her, though addressed to her father.

"It may seem strange to you when you know my mission, that I did not come before, but I will explain my reason at the proper time. I gave you my card, which announces my name; beyond that let me say I am the husband of Doctor Strange's sister."

Dolly's exclamation of wonder furnished Choate with an excuse to address her, and with a respectful bow, he began:

"I presume you are Mrs. Strange, and from your exclamation I am led to believe you have heard of me before, and no doubt my late brother-in-law referred to me in anything but complimentary terms. However, as you have had personal experience of Lucien Strange's behavior, I hope you will not attach much importance to the tales he may have told you of my alleged wrongdoing and cruelty. It was natural for him to try and excuse himself, and to do

stand, and don't a baby." "not ten minutes you would have w's throat!" to acknowledge Bob forward, they were under where they saw ed lamp on the

#### LIV.

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onder furnisho address her, he began : Strange, and n led to believe before, and her-in-law re anything but however, as you ence of Lucen you will not o the tales he alleged wrongs natural for self, and to do

that he was not very particular whom he blamed, as you likely know."

"I know nothing of the sort," cried Dolly warmly, "I never knew of him telling a lie, and no matter what others may say, I will believe in him till I die."

The big, black-bearded tramp under the window trembled with joy, and in his pleasure clutched the arm of Bob Ryan, who returned the grip by putting his hand over Andy's mouth. Choate was surprised at Dolly's defense of her husband, but continued to address her in the same polite tone.

"Your defense of the deceased does you infinite credit, and I am afraid that the cruellest part of my task will be to undeceive you. I assure you, madame, that I came because I knew you had been wronged—cruelly wronged—and I desired to protect you from any scandal or exposure which could be avoided. It is needless to say that since I have seen you my sympathy has increased, and I will spare no effort to avoid giving pain."

Dolly looked helplessly at her father, and poor old Jo, wondering what was coming, and oppressed by an undefined fear, reached over and took Dolly's hand in his own. Mrs. Felder had grasped the idea that a calamity of some kind was upon them, and was preparing to speak her mind.

"Well, as fer's I'm consarned, I've bin 'spectin' it, so I hev. Ever since Dolly took up 'th Looshen to a wake, er the same's one, I knowed things'd go wrong an' so they hev, jest as I sed, an' sed not only oncet but hundreds an' hundreds of times, an' I'll leave it to Joel and Dolly if I haint; haint I now?"

"Yes, mother, hundreds of times, but that don't matter now. We are waitin' to hear what the stranger has to say, an' the sooner the better," said Jo, slowly.

"Well, as fer's I'm consarned 1—"

"Yes, madame, exactly," interrupted Choate, with a polite wave of his hand, as he addressed her. "Your knowledge of human nature led you to distrust Lucien Strange, and the subsequent proceedings have proven the wisdom of your judgment. There is no doubt that he was a bad man—an exceedingly vicious and unscrupulous man, whose early death was really a fortunate event for his friends. But to return to the business which brought me here," exclaimed the lawyer with a bow to Dolly. "There is a sum of money in the hands of the executors of Dr. Strange's mother, and it has brought to light the most villainous portion of Lucien's career. It has been truly said that the love of money is the root of all evil, and in Lucien's case it seems to be true. He forged a will in order to deprive

his own sister—my wife—of her share in her mother's property, but fortunately I was able to expose his nefarious design, and the court, without sentencing him, branded him as a forger. This enraged the scoundrel, and after assaulting me in the most brutal manner, he fled from the state, leaving his share of the estate in the hands of his mother's executors. No doubt, fearing that he would be prosecuted for forgery if he applied for the money, and thereby disclosed his whereabouts, the funds were permitted to remain in the bank. Well, after the newspapers published the account of his death, claims were filed in the court by his wife—or at least by one claiming to hold that relation to him, and—"

"But I did no such thing," exclaimed Dolly. "I knew of the money, but I would rather die in the poor-house than take a cent of it after Lucien told me that his honor was saved by leaving it untouched."

"Ah, yes, I understand your—ah—noble motives—but your—ah—husband was—er—apparently the husband of other wives, and two of them were the applicants to whom I refer."

Jo's hand had been closing tightly on Dolly's slender fingers while the lawyer spoke, and his eyes were fixed on the white face and wide-staring eyes that appealed in vain to Choate. Dolly, in a voiceless agony of surprise, turned to her father, and Jo's strong arm was thrown around his daughter's waist.

"Why, deary me! Bless my gray-hus!" cried Mrs. Felder. "Then Dolly haint even a widder an' Mayde is a—"

"It's a lie!" screamed Dolly, springing to her feet, her father still clinging to her hand. "I was his wife and I do not believe he had any other. He told me you were a scoundrel, and now I'm sure of it, you!"

"Madame, please remain quiet until I finish, and then you will be better able to judge—ah—what was that?" exclaimed Choate, turning towards the window, where Bob Ryan had just succeeded in crushing Andy against the wall, while the latter was making a desperate attempt to rise and climb through the window.

"It's the calves pasterin' out in the orchard," answered Jo, feebly. "Say, mister, you hain't wrong about this, air ye? There hain't no mistake, hain't ther?"

Dolly, white as a ghost and trembling like an aspen, stood staring at the stranger, her eyes dilating and her mind vainly trying to grasp the idea of having been dishonored by a scoundrel. She thought of Mayde—that the baby she loved more than she loved her life was the homeless

offspring of a bigamist, and clasping her hands over her eyes she cried again:

"It's a lie! It's a lie!"

"I am sincerely sorry to be the bearer of such painful tidings, but I assure you that I have kept my own counsel in this matter, and no one knows excepting my friend, the probate judge of our county, that Lucien had married more than once. I have investigated the marriages, and find that both in the United States were legally performed, and indeed I visited both of the wives and found them exceedingly pleasant and honorable persons. Having established the priority of one of the marriages, I was instructed by the wife who has the legal claim on the estate of the deceased to settle with the—ah—er—the others and prevent any exposure or scandal. I was glad to do this as the—er—ah—family—our family is an old and honorable one, and was never tainted with dishonor before. In fact the wife of the deceased instructed me to settle handsomely rather than have any scandal, and I have been able to get wife Number Two to sign a document abandoning any claim to the estate for an amount which is far less than I would think of offering you, as you have a child, which must be considered."

Choate paused to note the effect of his words. Jo and Dolly sat looking at each other in mute terror. Mrs. Felder alone seemed to have retained the faculty of speech.

"I'd never thought it of him," she said. "He didn't seem that kind of a feller!"

A slight scuttling noise on the verandah attracted Choate's attention, and he rose and moved towards the window. As he passed Mrs. Felder she grasped the skirt of his coat and detained him. He looked anxiously at the window, and Mrs. Felder assured him, "It was them calves."

"Say, nobody knows this 'round here, does they?" she inquired, in a stage whisper. "There hain't none of the neighbors knows anything on it?"

"No, madam; I can assure you that I have been prudence itself. I knew how agonizing the news would be, and have tried by every means in my power to shield your daughter from scandal. No one knows of it, and no one need know of it as long as the estate is released from the claims of the various wives that have been led into misfortune by my wife's reckless brother. Lucien's lawful wife instructed me to settle fifteen thousand dollars on—ah—er—on your daughter, on condition that nothing is said about the illegal marriage." Then, turning to Dolly, Choate, with his most respectful manner, continued: "I know it is almost an insult to talk of money matters

to you while you are overcome by the distress which I see my news has caused, but as I am a business man, and came to settle this affair, I must obtrude this phase of the case. My instructions are to pay you fifteen thousand dollars on condition—excuse me if I speak technically—that you abandon all claims as a wife of Lucien Melroy Strange, and give me, as the representative of his lawful wife, a writing to the effect that you will never expose the memory of the deceased to further obloquy by divulging his crime as a bigamist.

This artful speech was lost on Dolly, and even Jo but half comprehended it, so dazed was he by the news he had heard.

"Say, Dolly, fifteen thousand dollars'd pay off them notes, an' more, too, an' nobody need know of the scrape you got into, an' that Mayde hain't legit-umate," whispered Mrs. Felder, in a wheedling tone. "You'd better 'gree to what this feller says, or else the hull thing'll come out, an' you'n the baby'll be disgraced!"

Dolly looked into the face before her and then at Choate. The lawyer, overjoyed by the anxiety of Mrs. Felder to settle the whole thing, was smiling benignly on everybody, but when he caught Dolly's glance he looked sad and sympathetic and slowly rubbed his hands together as if in painful suspense.

"I don't want any money from you or anybody else! I do not believe what you have said. It couldn't be," Dolly spoke as if her lips were stiff with cold, and with her hand pressed against her heart, she moved unsteadily toward the door.

"But I have the proofs, and to-morrow I will show them to you. I see you cannot endure more to-night. Pardon me, if in my desire to serve you I have been the bearer of painful tidings. To-morrow I will call again and you will be more able to discuss the matter. Good night!"

Choate had risen from his chair and stood close to Dolly, while she stood with her trembling hand on the door knob. As he said "good night" he extended his hand, but she looked scornfully at him and cried:

"I do not believe you! I think you have lied! I hate you!"

With shaking limbs she passed through the door, and Choate, turning to Jo, begged him to think over what he had said, and advise his daughter to protect the good name of herself and child and the memory of her vicious husband by agreeing to the settlement.

"Mother, go an' see where Dolly's gone to," said Jo, and after his wife had left he drew himself up and towered above his visitor while he demanded:

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what you've told me to-night is true, every  
word, an' that my girl is dishonored and  
her baby a bastard?"

Choate's pale eyes looked squarely into  
Jo's as he answered:

"Every word I've told you is Gospel  
truth, so help me God!"

After a long pause, Jo begged Choate  
to return with his proofs in the afternoon,  
when Dolly had had an opportunity to  
think the matter over.

As Jo opened the front door for Choate,  
he found Bob and Andy standing near  
by, looking westward, where a bright  
light was creeping into the sky.

"Guess there's a fire over there," said  
Bob, jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

"Tain't fur off, nuther," answered Jo,  
with wakening interest.

And it wasn't. Malon Klimner's barns  
were on fire.

## CHAPTER XLV.

JONAS WHITEFOOT RESOLVES TO DO SOME-  
THING DESPERATE.

"Get down to Klimner's just as quickly  
as you know how. That woman has fired  
the barns, and there may be developments  
tonight. I will be down there in an hour,  
or maybe less. Meet me at the end of the  
west barn."

Bob and Andy were sitting on the  
grass in the lane putting on their shoes  
and watching the redlight springing up in  
the sky. Andy, trembling with rage, was  
disposed to act on his own judgment and  
declare himself to his wife and father-in-  
law, denounce Choate, and take chances  
of clearing himself of the charges of mur-  
der and forgery. One thing, at least, he  
could disprove, was that he had ever mar-  
ried before he met Dolly.

"You'll ruin everything by your in-  
fernial temper, and live all your life  
branded as a felon if you make a break  
now. Go where I tell you, and I will  
look after this brother-in-law of yours and  
trap him all right. If you don't, you are  
an infernal fool, and deserve to get the  
worst of it."

"Don't be so unfeeling, Bob! You seem  
to think that I ought to be without the  
natural instincts of a man."

"You must have nothing but the in-  
stincts of a detective until this whole  
business is settled, and then you can be  
as spoony as you like. Till then, follow  
my directions and permit me to know  
what is best. I have been a detective for  
ten years, and you are not yet ten days  
in the service. I give you no orders but  
those imperatively necessary, and if you  
do as I tell you there's no doubt but you

will be straightened out yet before the  
world."

"But think of my wife, and what  
she will have to suffer before she  
finds out that she was lawfully  
married. Imagine the agony she must  
endure to-night thinking that she is  
dishonored and little Mayde is a nameless  
waif!"

Bob looked at him for a moment and  
then dryly remarked:

"You have suddenly become extremely  
considerate. The woman who for four  
years has been able to bear the shame of  
being known as a murderer's widow can  
bear for a few hours to think of being de-  
ceived as well as dishonored. I have  
been in the house now for a week and  
know right well that your wife has suffered  
every agony except a lack of faith in  
you; and I know, too, that you have suf-  
fered nothing that has not been caused by  
a lack of faith in her. Leave her to the  
final test, and then even your jealous  
eyes will see the truth. Go now, and  
meet me at the end of the west barn in-  
side an hour."

Andy was silenced. Never before had Bob  
spoken to him in this way, and the rebuke  
cut him to the heart. Without a word he  
rose, and was walking rapidly away when  
Bob called to him and said, "Take care  
and fix your leg before you meet any-  
body."

When Andy reached Klimner's all the  
barns were in flames. Perhaps two score  
neighbors were there doing their best to  
save the horses, wagons and implements,  
and to every one it was apparent that  
Malon Klimner was drunk. Aroused from  
the drunken stupor which nightly  
took the place of sleep, he drank deeply  
to fortify himself. There is always a point  
beyond which it is unsafe to pass, and the  
majority of men have to find this point by  
experiment. While his barns were burning  
Malon Klimner passed the line and  
became obviously drunk, beastly drunk,  
and his abusive tongue, unhampered by  
whisky and excitement, declared that the  
barns had been set on fire by the "—  
— — across the road."

As the flames rolled upwards and the  
crowd increased, Malon staggered here  
and there, bragging that he could stand  
the loss of his barns and not feel it.

"She wan'd me to 'lope 'ther, but I  
cudn see it—damner an' she said iffer  
diden due, she'd burn m'barns, an'burner  
barns she did an' even 'en I get off cheap  
nuff the ole—"

The neighbors were horrified, and  
'Rene, who, with a shawl over her head,  
stood beside Sadie, ran home in terror  
lest the drunken bully might catch sight  
of her face and fulfil his murderous threat.

Near a clump of elders bushes a group of men were discussing Malon's scandalous accusation, and hidden deep in the shadow Jonas Whitefoot listened to the opinions of his friends.

"I know one thing," said one, "if she was my wife and anyone talked about her as Lon Klimmer did, there'd be some gunpowder burned the minnit I heard of it, even if she was guilty and I got hung fer squaring it up."

"I wonder what old Whitefoot'll do when he hears of it?" remarked a second.

"Nuthin'" exclaimed a third. "Any old man as is fool enough to marry a young woman is fool enough to let her do as she sees fit!"

"Well, I bet money that the old man gits down his gun when he gits home and gives it to some one!" said a fourth emphatically. "We'll soon know whether he's a mouse or a man or a long-tailed rat."

"I'd give it to Lon Klimmer fer braggin' about it iffer nuthin' else if it was me," added the first speaker; "the drunken hypocrite. I wonder he's bin left in the church as long as he hez!"

Jonas Whitefoot heard these and many other opinions while he lay concealed in the clump of elders. He shivered when he thought that the neighbors expected him to do something desperate. He was not a bloodthirsty man, yet he at once began to arrange a plan for the killing of Malon Klimmer. For three days he had been lying in wait for his wife and her paramour, scarce eating a mouthful, and brooding over his dishonor, and now he felt that he must be a man and revenge himself properly on the destroyer of his peace, or forever lose caste in the neighborhood. He had heard his wife's threats that she would burn down the barns, and had quietly resolved that he would save her the trouble by burning them himself. He had felt safe from prosecution for he knew that Malon would suspect his wife and be afraid to accuse her, but now he saw his mistake; the drunken braggart had published his shame to the multitude and nothing was now left but to prove himself a man by shooting his wife's betrayer. Jonas Whitefoot was a business-like man, and when he decided what to do he prepared a definite scheme, the first step of which was to get out of the neighborhood of his home as quickly as possible. Long before the sky ceased to be reddened by the flames of the burning barns, Jonas Whitefoot was hastening away from the scene of his dishonor. Had any one seen him that night as he trudged wearily along the dust-covered road, they never would have suspected

him of having murder in his heart. He was nearly sixty years old, small in stature, weazened and unkempt. For twenty-five years he had marketed the cattle of the Fellersburg district, and was a shrewd, sharp old man, who knew how to buy for little and sell for much. He was proud in his way, had courage and tact, and the greatest possible confidence in his own judgment. As he walked along he communed with himself, and asked what he, as a drover and man of business, should do to preserve himself from being the laughing stock of the district. He knew it was the boast of every man in all the country round, that should wife or daughter be misled, blood must flow. Again he decided that 'Lon Klimmer must be shot. But it must not have the color of premeditated crime! Certainly not, that was why he was hurrying away from home; nobody had seen him in the neighborhood, and in a day or two he would suddenly come back on the train, go home, hear of Malon's infamous charge against his wife, charge her with having dishonored him, and then seizing his gun, he would go over to Klimmer's and shoot Malon on sight. "No jury in Canada would bring me in guilty and I will be square with both Rene and her paramour!"

As he thought of this scheme old man Whitefoot chuckled and rubbed his hands. He was a business man and knew how to plan a lay-out of that kind; it was a simple plan, full of the sudden fury and outraged virtue which jurymen admire. Jonas quickened his pace as he thought of the sensation he would cause, the drovers in Buffalo and Montreal would learn that old Jonas Whitefoot was no slouch, and it would help him to do business.

Jonas knew his own morals would not bear investigation, but his wife was expected to be moral anyhow. At any rate he would teach her a lesson, and after this she would behave herself. Into none of his thoughts of the crime he had determined to commit, did the idea of sin or future remorse or horror at the shedding of blood ever come. He counted the chances of being catechized as to his whereabouts on the night of the fire, but decided that he would never be suspected of having applied the torch. He felt certain that he was all right; his plan could not miscarry.

Thirty hours later the down express stopped at the station just opposite Fellersburg, and Jonas Whitefoot alighted and started on foot for his home, his business-like intention of doing something desperate not having altered in the slightest.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

A COUPLE OF SCENES IN THE WHITE FARM-  
HOUSE.

After Choate had left, Jo, heavy hearted and almost despairing, turned into the house and found Dolly and her mother in the sitting-room.

"It hain't no use talkin', Dolly Felder—an' from what we bin hearin' t'night you hain't got no lawful name 'centin' Dolly Felder—it hain't no use talkin'; if you won't settle, then the hull of us'll hew to git out ahere afore snow flies, an' then what'll ye do? Of course, as fer's I'm consarned, I'm willin' to starve, an' Joel'd go beggin', but what'll you n Mayde do? You can't do nuthin', an' like nuff'd take up ith some wuthless town critter fur his style an' git nuthin' teat! Er air ye gunto marry Malon Klimmer, er what? Yell' hew t' make up yer mind now, fer Jo'n me's cum to the end of our rope, I kin tell ye that!"

Mrs. Felder felt it her duty to speak plainly, and though she was well-meaning woman she was succeeding in speaking brutally. Jo stood for a moment before he sat down in his big rocker, listening to the flood of words which were addressed as much to him as to Dolly.

"Mother, don't ye think Dolly's bin hurt about all she kin stand fer one night?" he inquired.

"Joel Felder!" exclaimed Mrs. Felder, in a high key, as she reached forward and pointed her finger at her husband, "I'm resolved onto one thing. I'm gunto take things into my own hands, an' I'm gunto do it now. You'n Dolly's bin bossin' it long 'nuff, an' things hez all gone t'racken ruin, an' party soon there won't be a roof over our heads, our nuthin' if you'n Dolly hew yer way."

"But mother—"

"Joel Felder! I'm gunto speak out now it I die fer it, an' as fer's I'm con—"

"But, mother, wait a—"

"JOEL FELDER!" almost screamed the dame, as she rose from her chair, "I'm gunto speak my mind now er never. I bin down-trod long 'nuff! I hain't bin consulted about nuthin'! You'n Dolly thought yerself too smart fer me, an' hain't done nuthin' fur years but play ith baby, an' go over sotty talk 'bout Loosheen, as brought all this trouble onto us, but I hain't gunto stand it no longer, an' I fer one, as fer's I'm consarned, am fer settlin' ith that lawyer feiler, an' not bein' turned out'n house'n home right here in Feldersburg, where we bin born an' bred, an' where we ve bin holdin' up our heads as high as the best; an' hew them laughin' at us, even them as I've helped through their troubles time 'n agin, an' them as I've

washed an' dressed when they was just born, an' tended fer till their mothers uv got round, an' hew them a-pintin' their fingers in a scornful tone of voice at me, an' me as good as enny uv 'em even if we air turned poor an' our girl did go wrong, an'—"

"Mother, shet up, er I'll cuff yer ears!" roared Jo, jumping up an' seizing Dolly, who was feebly and faintly struggling to leave the room in speechless agony, where she had been listening, not only to her mother's selfish babbling, but to the voice within her which said that little Mayde's future was wrecked and blackened. In another moment poor Dolly would have fallen, but her father's strong arm was around her and her head rested on the faded jeans blouse which covered old Jo's loyal heart, and she felt that the worst had not yet come—she still had her father.

"That's a nice way t' talk t' yer wife, Joel Felder, threatening to strike yer wife as hez bin true, an' lovin' an' a good housekeeper t' ye fer thirty years'n more," sobbed Mrs. Felder, bursting into tears.

"Ye know, Hannar, I never hez struck at ye ner laid a hand on ye in any way, shape or manner, but ye seem t' of gone out'n yer senses t'night, abusin' Dolly as ye've bin, when she kin jist bear up under the terrible trouble that lawyer throwed us into!"

Jo spoke apologetically and patted Dolly's head while he strove to quiet his excited wife.

"I don't care, Joel Felder! You haint no thought fer me while Dolly's round, an' now you'll stick by her an' what she thinks, if it sends the hull of us t' the poor house."

"Now, mother, sit down an' let's talk it over, an' then you'll know what's best," said Jo, seating Dolly and himself. "Now yer goin' in advance of what—"

"It haint no diff'rence what I say, an' as fer's I'm consarned, I might jist as well be in Calaforney fer all my say 'mounts to. I sed I couldn't see no harm in lettin' Malon Klimmer come t'see Dolly if he wanted to an' Dolly didn't mind, an' he'd a' bin willin' to pay them notes of your'n, an' what'd ye do? Wy threat'ned to shoot him if he ever came on the place agin!"

"But he was botherin' Dolly, mother—"

"Botherin' nuthin'; that's all you know 'bout girls. They like to be run after, and Dolly was beginnin' to think kinder sweet on Lon Klimmer—"

"Mammy, I was no such thing!" cried Dolly, with sudden anger.

"Yes, ye were, too, an' one day ye ast me if I didn't think that if Lon Klimmer had a good wife that he liked, wouldn't

he be a better man, an' then bimeby you sed you were sorry that you couldn't bear him, an' sighed an' looked—"

"Mammy, I wasn't thinking about him then. I was thinking of—"

"Never mind, Dolly," said Jo, interrupting them both. "We must think of what we heard to night and decide on some—"

"I'm fer signin' off, as fer's I'm concerned, and no talkin' ll budge me a hair! Fifteen thousand dollars! Why, thet 'd pay off them notes an' everythin'! It 'd be sewercide not to! An' if ye don't! Why, then what! A lawsuit spendin' what little we got left, an' everybody 'll know thet you hain't been legally married, and thet Mayde hain't nuthin' but a—"

"Stop it ther'! Don't git started agin," snorted Jo, pointing his finger warn'gly at his wife.

"I don't believe it's true! I'm sure it's all a lie to get held of the money Lucien left, and I won't sign the paper. If you get turned off the farm I'll work and support you teaching music or somethin'. We won't starve, mammy, so don't tease me to do it," begged Dolly reproachfully.

"But then hain't it better t'hev' Mayde, hev' a name than t' go makin' a fuss an' gettin' everyone to know how ye bun' fooled?"

This staggered Dolly. So long as the argument kept away from little Mayde she was firm, but when the picture of her little black-eyed baby, with her proud look and haughty manners, rose before her, she grew weak and trembling with the fear of the shame which might cloud her future.

Jo saw that Dolly was hesitating, and begged her to go to bed, and next moun'ning they could make up their minds when the proofs of Lucien's previous marriages had been examined. Eager to escape an immediate decision Dolly went up to her room after being embraced by her mother, who clung to her, saying: "Don't be hard on me, Dolly; it's best fer's all, an' nuthin' wrong about it, nuther!"

Jo opened the side door and looked out. Bob Ryan, sitting on the verandah very near the door, rose up and motioned Jo to come out. Jo instantly suspected Bob of having been eavesdropping, and with the quick instinct of love feared that Dolly's secret was a secret no longer. Hoping to conciliate Bob, he stepped out on the verandah and closed the door behind him.

"Come out to the barn. I want to have a talk with you where we can't be overheard," Bob whispered.

Jo followed him, and for an instant wished that he could throw his burly guide into the well and close his mouth forever. But such a thought could not dwell in the pure mind of Jo Feider, and with a sigh the bare-headed old man sat down on the door-sill of the drive-house beside the yellow-haired tramp who held in his power the secret of his Dolly's life.

"You are a man of honor, aren't you—a man whose word is as good as his most solemn oath," inquired Bob in a business-like tone.

"Yes, I hope my word is good; I don't remember ever breaking it," answered Jo sadly.

"Will you promise that what I tell you to-night shall not be repeated to any one, not to a living soul, especially not to your wife or daughter?"

"Yes, I promise!" answered Jo uneasily, and moving slightly further away from Bob.

"Well, then, I'm a detective, not a tramp, and I have been listening to every word spoken in your house to-night."

"You infernal sneak!" ejaculated the troubled old man, moving still further away.

"Don't be so fast. I told you once that tramps are philosophers; now I say that detectives are. It is a matter of business with us and many a crime would go unpunished if we did not play the sneak. But to the point: Forney W. Choate is a har of the first water, your son-in-law was never married to anyone but your daughter, and he is trying to cheat her out of a quarter of a million dollars' worth of funds."

"Great Cæsar!"

"And more than that, he is prepared to go any lengths to get her to assign her claim. I want him to be made to swear to a half a dozen documents, and then I will have him sewed up so tight for perjury that he'll never get loose. It was he who first blasted the character of your son-in-law and drove him forth branded as a forger when he, himself, was the forger, so you need have no scruples in trapping him. Do as I tell you and you will not only punish Choate but will clear the name of Dr. Strange from the taint of forgery, and will make it honorable for his wife to take the fortune his mother left him, which amounts to nearly three hundred thousand dollars."

"Wh-a-a-a-t?"

"Yes, three hundred thousand dollars and an honorable name for Dr. Strange and his family."

"Thank God!" fervently uttered behind the barn door startled both Bob and

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uttered be-  
both Bob and

Jo. In an instant the detective was in  
the hiding place and pulled out a woman.  
"Where's the doctor, poor boy?" cried  
Janet, for it was she. "Poor lad, how  
happy he'll be."

"Eh!" gasped Jo.

"Shut up, fool!" snapped Bob, angrily,  
"he doesn't know!"

But Jo did know. The thought that  
Lucien was still alive flashed through his  
mind, and seizing Bob by one arm and  
Janet by the other, he demanded the  
truth. His vise-like grip was almost un-  
bearable, and Bob confessed at once that  
while he did not intend at present to tell  
him so, yet Lucien Strange was alive and  
well and not far away.

"The tramp that fainted! Don't you  
remember? That's him!" cried Janet.

"Confound you, shut your yob, or  
everything will be ruined yet!" exclaimed  
Bob, savagely, as he gave Janet a violent  
shake. "We came back to hunt out the  
secret of the murder, and we have just  
solved that problem, so that Dr. Strange  
will be cleared of both charges at once if  
we are careful."

"Oh, God! God! Thank God!" whispered  
Jo, reverently, repeating again and  
again, in almost inaudible tones, the name  
of his Maker.

"You must say nothing yet, for the  
work is only half done, and if a bad break  
is made, it can never be fixed."

"Deed I'll no say a word," muttered  
Janet.

"Deed, if you hadn't blabbed it, he  
would not have known, so keep your  
mouth hermetically sealed. And you, Mr.  
Felder," said Bob, respectfully but im-  
pressively, "remember your promise to  
say nothing, but do as I say. You need  
not be afraid to follow my advice, because  
even if your daughter did sign off, it  
would not be worth the ink it would take  
to write it, if her husband is alive or if she  
was lawfully married, for the simple rea-  
son that she cannot sign away her daugh-  
ter's property."

After receiving most minute directions  
Jo went back to the house and to bed.  
As he passed Dolly's room he could hear  
her sobbing, and for an instant he lingered  
at the door, impelled by an almost irre-  
sistible desire to tell her that her troubles  
were almost over, but he remembered his  
vow and passed on to his own room.

Dolly heard him as he entered his room,  
and the poor little sweetheart struggled  
to choke her sobs lest they might sadden  
her old father's heart. Soon she heard  
Jo's voice, high, exalted, rapturous, thank-  
ing God for His mercies, and praying:

"Oh, God! God! good, just, loving,  
Almighty God, make it true; for her sake  
make it true. Oh, God, good, great God,

make her happy, an' that's the only way  
to do it. Please God, do it; oh, do, Al-  
mighty God."

Dolly was inexpressibly surprised and  
awed by her father's prayer. Never before  
had she heard him address the Most High.  
Slipping down from her bed she also knelt,  
and pressing her tear-stained face against  
the sheets she too began to pray.

And the dawa was not far off.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### A COUNCIL OF WAR AND A BOLD STROKE.

Detective Ryan hurried towards Klim-  
ner's the moment Jo Felder left him, but  
the fire was beginning to slacken its fury,  
and many of the neighbors had left for  
home before he rejoined Andy. Malon  
Klimmer was lying in the kitchen beastly  
drunk, and Sadie and her mother were  
crying together on the little piazza which  
overlooked the burning barns. Andy, waiting  
eagerly to hear what had hap-  
pened up at Felder's, began at once to  
question Bob, but the detective answered  
by asking other questions.

"Drop it for a spell, my dear fellow,  
and tell me what you have seen and  
heard—did you see the fair fire-bug?"

"Yes, she was here," said Andy, "but  
only for a little while. Malon Klimmer  
was blazing drunk, and went around ac-  
cusing her of setting fire to the barns, and  
calling her every beastly name he could  
find. He seemed to recognize the fact  
that everyone knew he was drunk, and  
unmasked himself completely. He lies in  
the kitchen there, snoring like a hog.  
'Rene rushed home the moment she  
heard him begin his abuse."

"Where's old Whitefoot?"

"I haven't seen him, but he must have  
been 'round somewhere, for I saw him in  
the granary window just before I went up  
to Felder's!"

"Listen around and hear what the peo-  
ple are saying; we will have to make a  
strike to night, somewhere." Bob was in  
a quandary and spoke hesitatingly.  
Malon's drunken denunciation of 'Rene  
Whitefoot had complicated matters, and  
things must quickly come to a crisis. If  
her husband, with the knowledge he pos-  
sesses of her infidelity, had heard Malon's  
charges, he would be sure to act at once  
and perhaps kill Malon or frighten him  
away! As he turned these probabilities  
over in his mind, he joined a group of  
young men who were discussing the fire  
and the charges Malon had made against  
Mrs. Whitefoot.

"By the great horn spoon, there'll be  
trouble when old Whitefoot gets home,"  
one of them said. "The old man is sly

and smart, and if he don't make Malon Klimmer sweat, I'm a sinner."

"But, say, d'ye really think she did set 'em on fire?" demanded Reuben Hill. "I, for one, never believed them stories about her'n Lon Klimmer!"

"Did ya see her skip when Lon began to tell about her wantin' him t'elope wither? I b'lieve it, and I don't blame her nuther, even if she did put a match to the barns."

"Say! d'ye know, I wouldn't wonder if Lon did it himself for the insurance!" suggested a third youth.

"Ner me!"

"Ner me!"

"Ner me!" chorused a half-dozen voices.

"But what the devil difference'll make to old Whitefoot? He'll b'lieve the tale, and how'll his wife square herself, when half the people of the district b'lieved she'n Lon Klimmer was too thick, even afore anything was sed!"

"D'ye know, I thought I saw the old man to-night—dodgin' along the fence ther' just south o' them elders. It was just when the rafters fell in the west barn, an' there was a ter'ble strong light, but mebbe it wa'n't him but I swow it was his dead image."

"No, it couldn't uv bin him er he'd showed up. By jiminy! I want to be here when he gits onto the tale Lon Klimmer's bin tellin'. Gosh, won't he howl!"

"Where is he, anyhow?"

"Off buyin' cattle. Ye saw Mrs. Whitefoot skip out when Lon was shootin' off his mouth! Well, I'll bet she keeps agoin' till mornin', and afore Jonas gits back she'll be gone, fer good too!"

"Like enuff! Shouldn't wonder if she did!" responded several of the bystanders.

Bob's mind was made up. He must see Mrs. Whitefoot at once, and by frightening her, learn the details of the murder. Should she run away he would be as far off as ever and the murder could not be cleared up, except by Malon's confession, which was too remote a chance to consider. But how would he manage it? Should he call at Whitefoot's house and demand an interview? But Whitefoot might be home and then his wife would not dare tell what she knew! At any rate he must try it; no time was to be lost, and the chances were all against old Whitefoot having returned to his wife after hearing and seeing what he had during the past few days.

The fires were nearly out, and the last half dozen stragglers were leaving when

Bob roughly shook Andy's shou'lder and told him to follow. Andy had been leaning over the fence thinking of Dolly and breathing solemn vows that she should not be left much longer in suspense.

"Come on, chummin'; we'll strike a bold blow for liberty to-night, and you want to drop mooning, I tell you, till we get there. Come along, keep in the shadow, and bend your head low while passing the open spot in the trees."

They paused for a moment under the tree shading Whitefoot's gate, and Bob whispered to his companion, "We play cold cards now, and you must keep your wits about you, and bear witness to whatever I declare is true. If I bully and browbeat the woman, make no movement to prevent; let her see that we are inexorable; that she must do exactly as we tell her, or suffer the consequences."

"Shall I tell her who I am?" whispered Andy.

"No!" snapped Bob, "tell her nothing—that least of all! You are not here to blab, but to find out, and if you declare yourself before I tell you to I quit the job that instant. Untie your leg and come on; you can drop your French talk, but stick to the rest of your disguise. Stand at the front door; I'll knock at the one in the kitchen."

Andy had barely time to station himself before he heard a sharp, authoritative rap, which rang loudly through the house. He could hear a movement in the bedroom, near where he stood, but there was no answer made to the alarm. Again came the short, sharp, impatient knocks, imperatively demanding admission. Andy heard someone rise from the bed and walk toward the back door.

"Who's there?" called a loud but shaky voice, in a vain attempt to conceal mortal fear.

"Someone who in the name of the law will be forced to break in the door if you do not open it. If you act wisely you will be quiet and admit me. The house is surrounded and none can escape."

The door was opened, and Bob entering, locked it behind him. "Mrs. Whitefoot you are under arrest. You are not dressed, I presume; go to your room and put on such garments as you will need to wear in jail!"

"I have done nothing to merit this indignity," cried the trembling woman.

"Dress yourself and we will then discuss this matter. If you are innocent you will be able to prove it when the proper time comes."

Andy heard 'Rene re-enter her room, and in a moment a light streamed through the half-closed shutters. He could hear the miserable woman's

dy's shoulder and Andy had been leaning of Dolly and that she should be in suspense. " ; we'll strike a to-night, and you tell you, till weing, keep in the head low while the trees." ent under the tree te, and Bob whis- " We play bold at keep your wits ness to whatever bully and brow- no movement to at we are inexor- exactly as we tell ences." I am?" whispered

" tell her nothing. You are not here and if you declare to I quit the job our leg and come French talk, but disguise. Stand ock at the one in

to station him- r, authoritative rough the house. ent in the bed- d, but there was alarm. Again patient knocks, admission. Andy the bed and walk ed a loud but empt to conceal

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Bob entering, rs. Whitefoot You are not your room and ou will need to

to merit this ling woman.

will then dis- e innocent you on the proper

ter her room, ght streamed ed shutters. ble woman's

half-choking sobs and smothered cries of grief and terror. He almost pitied her. " Hurry up!" Bob called through the door.

" Oh, I cannot go; I didn't do it!—There is an awful mistake—it wasn't me—I am trembling so I cannot fasten my dress," cried 'Rene, her voice shaking, and a long, choking sob prolonging each sentence.

" Where is your husband?" demanded Bob, who had been certain from the moment he heard 'Rene's voice in answer to his knock, that the old man was away.

" He is away, or he would never let me be arrested this way!" sobbed 'Rene.

" I'd like to see him prevent it. Come out here now, you've had time enough, and we can't wait all night for you!"

'Rene opened the door, and stood for a moment, with downcast eyes, trembling on the threshold, and then her anger rose, for the man who had been giving her such imperious orders was nothing but a ragged-looking tramp, with stubby red beard and sweat-stained calico shirt.

" Who are you? Pretending to be an officer! What do you want?" she cried fiercely.

Bob smiled calmly, and waving his hand towards the table, ordered her to put down the lamp and take a seat. She stood still and he moved up to the front door, opened it, and in walked Andy, erect and scowling. The door was slammed shut, locked, and the key put into Bob's pocket before 'Rene recovered from her surprise.

" Here is another officer whom you have probably seen before. We are not tramps but detectives who have been dogging your steps for months. Last Friday night we were here and heard and saw your interview with Malon Klimmer."

" Ah, you are tired, you'd better sit down," sneered Bob, seizing the lamp which was about to drop from her terror-stricken hand. Unable to resist, she was pushed into a chair near the table; Bob seated himself opposite, while Andy, with his elbows on the table and his chin resting on his hands, watched her in silence.

" I confess, Madame Barnburner, that we do look a little unprofessional, but the detection of desperate crimes requires the efforts of men who are not ashamed to wear rags for a few days. Behold the rags and behold the criminal!" smiled Bob, pointing to his garments and then to 'Rene.

" I am not a criminal, and I did not burn Malon Klimmer's barns," answered 'Rene with returning courage.

" Indeed! Do you expect us to believe you after hearing you promise this conflagration last Friday night, when you

and Mr. Klimmer were having that interesting debate, during which he struck you in the face and you got ready to cut his heart out—cut his heart out, wasn't it—yes, that was it," continued Bob, replacing the memorandum book to which he had referred. " You see I was behind the book-case there, and had an excellent opportunity of jotting down the more interesting features of the conversation, and Detective Anderson, there, was near by to bear witness to everything. And here are a few trifles which I took from the pocket of your amorous friend when he took off his coat in the heat of the discussion. Do you know anything about this document, 'Johnson to Klimmer'?"

'Rene's face had in turn been pale and crimson as she listened to Bob's sneers. When she saw the paper in the detective's hands her white lips faltered: " Where did you get that?"

" From your friend's pocket, and as it bears the exact date of the murder, I am interested in knowing how Malon Klimmer got hold of it, and why it has turned up just now. You know all about it and I propose that you shall tell. You know what turning Queen's evidence means—that you tell what you know and save your own neck! Will you do it?"

" Save my neck! I had nothing to do with the murder! I am in no danger of hanging! I knew nothing about it!" cried 'Rene tremulously.

" Didn't, hey?" roared Bob, taking a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and shaking them significantly at 'Rene. " I'll soon show you! You were not accessory after the fact, d've know what that means? It means that you knew all along whodidit and concealed your guilty knowledge, and it means that you will have to bear the punishment. I want no more fooling, either tell us all about it or hold up your wrists for these!"

" I wasn't an accessory! I didn't know it was going to be done, and it was months afterwards before I knew anything about who did it," protested 'Rene, thoroughly frightened, and shrinking away from the handcuffs.

" Oh, then, you do know something about who did it then! You didn't lie when you told Malon Klimmer that you knew he did it! Denials are useless. You and your brother Tommy both knew of it, and Tommy shared in the proceeds of the crime. Not an accessory, hey? I'll bet a jury will say you were, and this barn-burning scrape to-night, and Klimmer's charge that you had been living unlawfully with him, and fired his barns because he wouldn't run away with you,

will rather tend to prove that you are an abandoned woman and a fit subject for twenty years in the penitentiary, if not for life. I can save you from jail, but I can't save your reputation. You know that after to-night, that is forever gone. If you tell us the whole truth my partner and I will give you a writing, solemnly promising to see that you are left at liberty. Everything is against you; your brother's participation in the money stolen from the murdered man; his attempt to rob Dr. Strange, which can be proven by two witnesses; your scandalous intrigue with Klimmer; your furious quarrel with him and threat to burn his barns; the fact that his barns were burned and my partner saw you apply the torch —"

"That last is a lie, everything else is true, but that last is false; I did not burn the barns."

"Even if you didn't, we heard you threaten to, and Malon Klimmer swore to-night that you did. There is no salvation for you except to tell it all. What should hinder you? You can't cling to Malon Klimmer after what he said to-night. Decide now or else put on your bonnet and these bracelets!"

"But my husband—" faltered 'Rene.

"He knows all about it. He was under that bed while I was behind the book-case."

"Then it was him that burnt the barns," 'Rene stammered out after a long pause. "I—I—I thought—I saw him to-night just at dark."

"All the better for you, then. If he has turned fire-bug he'll have to stand in with you or go down—tell us all about the murder and the tire can be kept quiet."

'Rene sat in silence for a moment, her heavy eyelids drooping and her hands clasped tightly against her heaving breast. Suddenly springing to her feet she cried :

"I know much less about it than you think, but I'll tell it all; give me the paper you promised me, first!"

"Give us paper and ink. Andy will give you the agreement, and take down what you say."

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### 'RENE WHITEFOOT'S CONFESSION.

Andy was furnished with a copybook which had been used for keeping petty accounts, and having selected some blank pages, began to write at Bob's dictation :

"I, Irene Whitefoot, do solemnly declare that I make the following statements of my own free will, and on condition that I am not to be prosecuted as an accessory after

the fact, I hereby make what reparation is possible for my long and—as I am informed—criminal silence.

My first suspicion as to the murderer of Peter Klimmer was caused by what was told me by my brother, Thomas Watson, on the night of the said murder. My brother had been riding with Malon Klimmer, and had noticed that the said Malon Klimmer was continually wiping his hands, looking at them, cleaning his nails, and rubbing his fingers, and when he, Thomas Watson, called Malon's attention to it he, Malon, flew into a passion and swore he would kill my brother if he ever went into court and testified that he saw him, Malon, wiping blood off his hands. He, Malon Klimmer, was partially intoxicated at the time, and asked my brother to help him kill Dr. Strange, because the doctor had caused some trouble which Malon Klimmer and my brother had to pay for. My brother could not raise his share of the money, and the day before the murder asked Malon Klimmer to help him out, but Malon said he had no money. The money, however, was raised by Malon, and my brother was loaned enough by Malon Klimmer to pay his half of the damages. My brother told me of his suspicions in order to break off the engagement between Malon Klimmer and myself, but I did not believe it, and I had resolved to marry him, when he refused to fulfil his part of the contract, and I married Jonas Whitefoot, and continued my acquaintance with Malon Klimmer, who lives almost opposite my place of residence. One night in the winter following my marriage, Malon Klimmer, who had been drinking heavily and continuously, though in secret, came to my house while my husband was absent. He was delirious, and thought some one was trying to arrest him for murdering his father. I tried to quiet him, but he was terribly frightened, and went on and told me that he did murder his father and did not know where to hide the proofs of his guilt. He handed me the document marked exhibit 'A,' and initialed by me, and a half sheet of paper with a lot of figures on—"

"Is that it?" inquired Bob, showing her a piece of paper.

"Yes, that is it."

"Go on writing, Andy."

"I recognized the paper marked 'B' as the one I had in my possession. I asked Malon Klimmer how he got them, and why he was afraid to have them found. He said they were done up with one of the packages of money he took from his father the night he killed him. He hid the package and did not go near it for three months, and in the meantime Mr. Johnson, who had received a large sum of money for making the agreement for some sale of lands, hearing that the document could not be found, denied the sale, and holds the lands still. When Malon found the paper his father's interest in the lands had grown to be worth \$15,000 or \$20,000, and he did not want to destroy the paper, or he would lose the chance of getting the property away from Johnson, and yet

what reparation and—as I am in to the murderer of used by what was Thomas Watson, said murder. My with Malon Klimmer at the said Malon Klimmer wiping his hands, g his nails, and rub when he Thomas attention to it he, ion and swore he he ever went into he saw him, Malon, is. He, Malon Klimmer, at the time, to help him, kill Dr. doctor had caused Klimmer and for. My brother of the money, and der asked Malon but Malon said money, however, d my brother was Klimmer to pay My brother told order to break off Malon Klimmer not believe it, and I him, when he re the contract, and not, and continued Malon Klimmer, my place of resi winter following Klimmer, who had and continuously, e to my house as absent. He thought some arrest him for tried to quiet him, stened, and went did murder his where to hide the handed me the 'A' and ini sheet of paper d Bob, showing

marked 'B' as session, I asked them, and why he found. He with one of the from his father e hid the pack or three months, Johnson, who had ney for making e of lands, heard not be found, the lands still, per his father's grown to be, and he did paper, or he e of getting Johnson, and yet

he dare not produce it, as the lawyer remembered seeing Peter Klimmer tie the papers up with a large bundle of bills, which were afterwards known to have been stolen, when Peter Klimmer was murdered. He told me he was in his father's room and had pried the chest open with an axe and had just taken what money was there when his father, returning home, suddenly opened the door, walked in, and looked it behind him. He said he stood still in the corner, hoping to escape notice in the dark; the handle of the axe was touching his fingers, he seized it. His father undressed himself and got into bed, but got up again and took a package from his pocket and started to go towards the chest by which Malon stood. He saw that his father would find him, and resolved to strike him with the back of the axe and escape. As his father came groping along he struck at him: the axe hit the wall and almost fell from his hand, and he clasped it with the other hand as well and struck violently at his father. He heard the edge of the axe crashing into his father's face and the blood flew over his hands. A flash of lightning revealed him to his father, who cried, "It's you, Malon," and tried to seize him, and, maddened by fear and excitement, he struck again and again at his father till he dropped to the floor. The package of money lying near the chest was revealed by another flash of lightning, and seizing the money he sprang out of the window, which slipped down again after he jumped out.

"The outside of the package of money was stained with blood, and so he hid it without opening it, but later he cut the edges off the bills and used them. He told me all this while he had an attack of delirium tremens, and gave me the papers to keep for him. I would not give them back, and kept them until he promised to elope with me. He said he wanted to settle up and sell out first, and needed those papers to get hold of the Johnson property. He said he would pretend that he had found them among some old papers which had been overlooked, but he didn't dare do it, and then he put me off by saying it was too soon, and he was afraid the lawyer would remember about them being tied up with the money that was stolen. He was up town the day we had the quarrel, and probably showed the papers to his lawyer, and things passed off so well that he thought he could throw me off.

"He often talked to me about the murder when he was sober—that is, as sober as he ever has been for the past two years—and never denied the story he told me; in fact, he has told it to me over and over again when he got frightened, and asked me if there was any danger of him being found out. He confided in me and said I saved him, because I took the papers away from him and kept him in my room until he got over the 'blues,' and could take care of himself again.

"His mother and sister have both heard him speak of murdering his father while he has had spells of delirium tremens; I do not know whether they believe it. I

noticed blood marks on the two papers, 'A' and 'B'; the stains were on the edges and where the papers were folded. I advised Malon to cover the stains with ink, and he did.

"I solemnly believe that Malon Klimmer killed his father, but do not believe he went to his room with the intention of doing it.

(Signed) "IRENE WHITEFOOT."

"That's all you can tell, is it?" demanded Bob, as 'Rene signed the declaration.

"Yes, that's all. It shows no guilt on my part, and is hardly worth the pains you have taken to get it, but now that it's over I'm glad it's done. I have told all I know, and that frees me. I didn't burn the barns, and though I can't prove that I didn't, you can't prove that I did, so that is settled. Now I suppose there is nothing to prevent me leaving here as soon as I like."

"Yes, madame, there is much to prevent you. This whole statement must be in evidence before you go. You are foolish to think of going. Klimmer has gabbled in his cups, but stay here and fight it out. We will make no public use of this paper, and you can stay and live on and help us, and perhaps by your aid we can trap our man without involving you at all. You know that we go slowly, but depend upon it we get there. You are in the presence of the two best detectives, so it is said, in America, perhaps in the world. You know our skill; do as we tell you. Work with us and for us, and no harm will befall you. Go against us, reveal a word of to-night's proceedings, and you are lost if Anderson and I can ruin you."

"You needn't be afraid," said 'Rene, bitterly, "I have no one to tell it to except my husband and Malon Klimmer. My husband would kill me if he knew it all, and Malon Klimmer has been so drunk since Friday that he doesn't know that he is running his neck into the gallows by abusing me. I'll be faithful, and when you go away take me with you, and I'll serve you well; make me a detective, give me a chance to live; what I have told to-night changes my whole life, and I may be thrown into the road."

"Oh, no, my dear madam. If Jonas has gone into the barn-burning business you are solid; he will have to abide with you, never fear!"

"Bob, don't you think you have made promises enough? Let's go," said Andy, rising.

"All right, chummy!" answered the jubilant Bob, "I'm with you! Now don't breathe a word and I'll see that you're cared for. Good night!"

"Yes, it's a bargain. Good night," Rene answered.

Once outside the house Bob Ryan clutched Andy's arm and whispered:

"We've got 'em! Bob Ryan's reputation's made and your's saved!"

"How?" asked Lucien.

"I'll show you! It may take weeks to work it out, or maybe it'll come in a few days. Keep mum. Come up to Felder's to-morrow about sunset if I don't send a message for you sooner. Don't quit watching. I'm going up to the county town right straight and to-morrow Mr. Choate walks into the trap, and I get authority to make arrests in Canada. Keep mum, old fellow, and we'll get there."

"I hope so," muttered Andy, dejectedly, as he turned away. "But it'll have to be on better evidence than we got to-night."

"It will, hey? I'll show you! Good-bye."

#### CHAPTER XLIX.

##### THE PROOFS.

At the appointed hour Forney W. Choate, emboldened by his previous success, fortified by a number of documents and refreshed by a night's sleep, sauntered through the gate and knocked at Jo Felder's door. He felt certain that Dolly would still refuse, but equally sure that she would finally be convinced.

Mrs. Felder opened the door and returned Choate's oily compliments by whispering that Jo and Dolly were both against him, but to hang on and they would consent if the proofs were strong enough. Choate smiled as she showed him into the parlor, and finding the room unoccupied, told her she was a sensible woman, and advised her to urge her daughter to accept the terms he offered, as the acceptance would mean a competence and no exposure, while refusal meant poverty and disgrace.

"I see it clear as day, an' you kin count on me every time on your side! Dolly'll do it sure if ye kin only make her sure that Looshen was married afore!"

"I'll fix that; I have proofs that will convince her," smiled Choate, who felt that he had obtained the key of the family council.

Mrs. Felder, when she went after Jo and Dolly, congratulated herself on the wise course she had chosen, and determined that the settlement should not fall through if she could prevent it. She announced this decision to Dolly, who enquired why she felt so set on having it that way.

"Just this, Dolly Felder! As ter's I'm

consarned, I don't want to be disgraced an' turned into the road to beg, just because you'n Jo hev took some crank. An' you kin just know that, as fer's I'm consarned, my mind's set on hevin' it that way, an' that way it's got to be or I'll make tracks, an' you'n Jo'll find out that it's me who's bin takin' care of ye all this time. Now!"

"Mammy, dear, I don't want to disgrace you, and never will," said Dolly, sadly, "but I want to do right and follow what Lucien would have me do if we were alive. I'm sure he never had any wife but me; I feel as positive as if I had known him all my life. It was impossible for him to commit a crime or deceive me in any such way."

Dolly, overcome by the distress and uneasiness of a sleepless night, burst into tears.

Mrs. Felder was visibly softened, but added, because she thought it her duty to be severe:

"Well, he's bin accused of enough, any-how, forgery an' murder an' bigamy an' everythin'. Where there's so much smoke ther must be some fire."

Jo, coming in from the barn, threw his hat on the lounge and told Dolly and her mother to follow him to the parlor. "An' one thing," said Jo, emphatically, as he glanced meaningly at Dolly, "don't agree to nothin' till I agree first."

Choate greeted them with effusive politeness, and in addressing Dolly he assumed an air of sympathy and tender solicitude, which at once made her spirit rise up in rebellion.

"How are you feeling this morning?" he enquired, as he reached out his hand. The hand was ignored by Dolly, and he placed it on the back of a chair, as if he had not been offering it to her, and continued:

"I sincerely hope that the unfortunate tidings which it was my unfortunate duty to bear did not prevent you from sleeping or cause you to—ah—er—feel any—er—er—annoyance at me as the—er—vehicle of the evil tidings."

It was not often that Choate stammered or forgot his part, but while he spoke Dolly's deep, dark eyes looked straight into his, coldly and contemptuously, and in spite of every effort his red lashes dropped over his pale eyes and he forgot what he had determined to say.

"It doesn't matter! Where are the proofs you promised to bring?" she asked, dropping wearily into a chair.

"They are here. Permit me to explain them," said Choate, with a bow which was in itself an apology for the unpleasant developments which must follow. He drew his chair nearer her and was almost bending over her knee when she pushed

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her seat away from him and coldly re-  
quested him to address her father. An  
ugly tightening of his thin lips was the  
only sign he made of having been hurt,  
and without further ado he showed Jo  
two marriage certificates which bore the  
names of Lucien M. Strange and another  
contracting party. In addition there  
were affidavits from a clergyman and a  
justice of the peace, describing Lucien's  
appearance; two from the wives to the  
effect that they had married him in ignor-  
ance of his history, and believing him to  
be unmarried. Following these were the  
affidavits of people who had rented rooms  
and furnished board for Lucien Strange  
and his wife, describing both the  
man and the woman. A memo-  
randum was exhibited mentioning a  
half dozen hotels, the registers of which  
showed the signature, "L. M. Strange  
and wife," and last of all, a copy of a  
declaration filed in a pending divorce  
suit, wherein plaintiff pleaded the deser-  
tion of her husband, Lucien M. Strange,  
as sufficient reason for the annulment of  
the marriage.

While Choate read over these papers  
he often looked at Dolly, and his voice  
began to have a triumphant ring as he  
saw she was beginning to feel the strength  
of his evidence. Jo often looked curiously  
at the lawyer, as it unable to compre-  
hend something, and Choate invariably  
went over the papers again with addi-  
tional explanations, never imagining that  
the farmer was simply wondering that  
even so bold and accomplished a villain  
as Forney W. Choate dare perpetrate  
forgeries such as the ones before him.

"Well, now!" exclaimed Mrs. Fielder,  
as Choate, leaving the documents in Jo's  
hands, leaned back in his chair, clasped  
his hands behind his head and looked  
triumphantly at Dolly, "as fer's I'm con-  
cerned it's clearer'n noonday that Looshen  
was a bigumist of the deepest dye! An'  
I can't see how anyone kin resist them  
air proofs!"

Dolly's face had grown chalky white  
and the corners of her mouth trembled  
when she raised her sad eyes to her father's  
and awaited his reply. A look flashed  
between father and daughter, and hope  
again revived in Dolly's heart.

"I can't see how them papers kin be  
got around!" exclaimed Jo. "They hang  
together an' prove that Lucien was a  
mighty bad man, but I hate to see my only  
child disgraced 'ithout askin' some legal  
advice, an' if you'll go up town 'ith me an'  
submit them papers to a lawyer friend of  
mine an' do what he sez is right I'll folle  
his advice an' tell Dolly t' sign."

"But my dear sir, you are making a  
grave mistake," suggested Choate, hastily.

"By adding another to the list of those  
who already know of this unfortunate  
affair you incur great danger—danger to  
which I am not prepared to expose either  
my clients or my family."

"I'm not scared of my lawyer. He's  
done my work fer thirty year, an' if I hed  
ast his advice afore I signed them notes  
I'd bin in a different fix to-day. Of course  
it's Dolly's affair, an' she kin do as she  
sees fit, but I won't advise nuthin' till I  
see old man Laird. What dy'e say, Dolly?"

"It is with you, Pappie, to advise me,  
and I think you are doing just right,"  
answered Dolly.

"This is utter folly!" exclaimed Choate,  
sharply, "and having submitted such in-  
contestable proofs, I do not feel disposed  
to run around after country lawyers and  
be the butt of their whms and pettifog-  
gery."

"Very well, that settles it. I won't  
advise Dolly to sign it until Lawyer Laird  
sees that dockymen, and—and Dolly hez  
the money in her fist," Jo stammered  
and hesitated when he spoke of the  
money, his whole nature revolting against  
even the semblance of a trade with dis-  
honor, but Choate at once caught the idea  
that it was fear about the money that  
held Jo back.

"You needn't be afraid about the  
money," he said, quickly, "I will get a  
check marked 'good,' or pay you the  
cash before I ask your daughter to resign  
her claim by signing this paper."

"You hasn't got the money with ye,  
hev ye?" enquired Jo, suspiciously.

"No, but I'll go to the town and fix  
that all right, and be back this evening!"

"Why not go 'ith me'n Dolly and git  
the money, an' let old Laird look over  
these dockyments? It wouldn't take half  
an hour, an' me'n Dolly'd feel satisfied,"  
persisted Jo.

"But this Laird may want to show his  
smartness, and make a big fee by delav-  
ing me for days and weeks. I have spent  
a vast deal of time over this affair already  
and came in person to attend to this set-  
tlement to insure secrecy, and now I pro-  
pose to wind the matter up at once or let  
matters take their course. You must  
accept to day or not at all, no matter  
what Laird says. I assure you that this  
is final." As he concluded Choate stood  
up very stiffly and reached for his hat.

Jo betrayed great anxiety as he also  
rose to his feet, and his voice trembled as  
he begged Choate to be easy with him  
and let his lawyer see the papers. "It  
can't be worse than Dolly refusin' to sign  
them, nohow, an' chances air that Laird  
d'veise her to sign. Anyhow, I'll prom-  
ise for her that it'll be settled to-day one

way or t'other, if ye'll let Laird do the settlin', and poor I am I'll pay the fee."

Choate saw how eager Jo was for the settlement, and began to think that the affair could be crowded through more rapidly if he consented to let Laird have a hand in it than if he refused. Sharp lawyer and scoundrel that he was, he mistook Jo's anxiety to get the papers submitted to Laird for a greedy haste to see the money paid into Dolly's hands, and for once his debased idea of human motives led him into error.

"You'll hav' to hav' a witness, anyhow, so you may jist as well let Laird know, seein's some on'd hav' to find out," urged Jo, who was encouraged by Choate's hesitation.

"You and Mrs. Felder would do as witnesses without anyone else, but as you are set on having this Laird look over the papers I'll consent, and I hope it will satisfy you both that I've treated you well."

"Let's go at once and hav' it over," exclaimed Jo, opening the door. "I'll go an' hav' the team hitched up."

"Very well," answered Choate, looking at Dolly as he spoke. She was steadyng herself by clinging to the mantelpiece, her face as white as marble, her dark eyes hopeless, and her lips quivering.

"As fer's I'm consarned, I think yer the most perfect gent that's bin this way for a long spell, an' I'm more'n glad that Jo hain't spilled everything by his blamed contrary talk while he was just spilin' all t'me t'settle. Of course, as fer's Dolly's consarn'd, she wouldn't take the arth an' think she's bin fooled an' spiled, but things is as they is, an' ther haint no use tryin' ter make black white any more'n ther' is in tryin' to pick up spilled milk, as I was a tellin' Marier Hackett no later'n a week ago—just a week ago night afore last, while I was a-settin' up ither, helperin' through a ter'ble trouble that I was afraird'd take off, though she's pretty much outer danger now, seein's the baby's more'n two weeks old, an' she a-settin' up a little ev'ry day now, a-lookin' ter'ble peaked an' run down, though; an' Jim Hackett—that's her husband—kin thank me fer bringin' her through. Well, as I was sayin', when Marier was moanin' an' groanin', I sed, ther hain't no use a-givin' up an' the like a' that, for what's did is did, an' it can't be did over agin' nohow ye fix it!"

"Very true, indeed, I'm sure your daughter need feel no sense of shame or guilt, as she was deceived and betrayed under the sacred bond of marriage. Ah! Mrs. Felder, I'm afraid your daughter is

fainting!" exclaimed Choate, springing towards Dolly, but she motioned him away and called feebly to her mother:

"Mammy, help me to my room; I must get ready to go."

Choate's heart was hard to find, but it was touched by the voiceless agony of that white face as it looked up at him for an instant while he held open the door to let her pass.

"Mom-mie! d'an'pa's says I t'ant doe in'e buddie for a lide. I t'ant to doe!" sobbed Mayde as she caught her mother's skirts at the door.

The sound of her darling's voice overcame poor Dolly and, sinking on the floor, she grasped her baby in her arms and sobbed. "Oh, Mayde, Mayde, I'm going to sell your good name and mine for money. Oh, my heart will break!"

"Poo' mom-mie! Mayde, unt ty any mo'. Poo' mom-mie ty t'ause Mayde nassie dirl! Poo' mom-mie!" cooed May, patting her mother's face and hair.

"Come, Dolly, ther haint no time to lose, Jo'll be ready in a moment. Go an' wash yer face an' git a bonnet an' things on," scolded Mrs. Felder, as she tried in vain to lift the hysterical Dolly from the floor.

"You had better remove the little girl; she excites her mother!" Choate advised.

The sound of his hateful voice quieted Dolly, and she at once yielded to her mother's efforts to raise her to her feet.

"Go out to grandpa, Mayde," she said. And then going upstairs she prepared for the journey, as victims prepare for the sacrifice. When Jo helped her into the seat beside him his heart bled for the wan, despairing Dolly, but he could not even whisper a word of comfort, as the lawyer was in the seat behind. She leaned heavily against him as they rode along, but when he patted her cheek she did not look up at him or return the caress. His heart was heavy and it was cruelly wounded when, as he was helping her up the stairs to Lawyer Laird's office, she burst into tears and sobbed, "Oh, Pappie, Pappie, I never thought you'd take money for my dishonor!"

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#### CHAPTER L

FORNEY W. CHOATE IN THE TOILS.

In Lawyer Laird's outer office, a well-dressed young man bent low over a desk as the trio entered, and when the door closed on them, he looked up, slipped a pair of blue glasses over his nose, and curled up the waxed ends of his moustache, while he awaited developments. Detective Ryan was a handsomer man than Bob Ryan, the tramp, and his clothes, which

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Bob Ryan,  
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had been awaiting him in the baggage-  
room of the depot, changed his appear-  
ance so that even Jo would scarcely have  
recognized him. Choate had seen him  
but once, and was unlikely to suspect him  
of being the man who emptied his cigar  
case.

The inner door had not been closed for  
over twenty minutes when it reopened and  
Choate and Laird came out together. The  
latter was a fat, soft, innocent looking  
dove of a man, whose chief business was  
conveyancing and office practice. His  
advice was said to be the best in the dis-  
trict, but it was given in a joking, don't-  
matter-whether-you-take-it or not sort of  
tone, which impressed strangers disagree-  
ably.

"Only a matter of form, my dear sir,  
made absolutely necessary by our code  
and practice. This is a monarchical coun-  
try, and we surround law and its processes  
with every formality and all the pomp  
and circumstances of a court pageant!"

Choate looked disgusted and discon-  
certed, but the jolly Laird spoke to Ryan  
and told him to read aloud the affidavit he  
gave into his hand, and witness the signa-  
ture which Mr. Choate would affix. Ryan  
read a declaration which in effect  
solemnly affirmed that the deponent had  
personal knowledge that the signatures on  
the certificates of marriage and affidavits  
were genuine and those of bona-fide per-  
sons, and he of his personal knowledge  
knew that said affidavits had been made  
by those purporting to have made them  
before those whose signatures made them  
official."

"This is the most absurd office rule I  
ever heard of," grumbled Choate, as he  
signed the declaration and kissed the book.  
"I imagine a lawyer making everybody  
swear who comes into his office that they  
shall tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
nothing but the truth! It results, I sup-  
pose, in the most wholesale perjury."

"Yes, very bad! very bad! but it  
keeps one lawyer from imposing on  
another, and prevents us from having to go  
to the trouble of investigating every trifling  
affidavit. Now, if you will go and get a  
marked check, I will have all your papers  
signed and ready by the time you get  
back."

Detective Ryan had left the office and  
was back again before Choate returned  
from the bank with a check, which was  
inspected by Laird and pronounced satis-  
factory. Dolly stood by the window,  
looking hopelessly over the busy street  
below. Laird held the check in his hand,  
and Choate had folded up his papers and  
was buttoning his coat over the pocket  
which contained them, when the door

opened and a policeman entered, followed  
by the detective.

"That's the man!" cried Ryan, point-  
ing to Choate.

"Forney W. Choate, you are my pris-  
oner!" recited the constable, exhibiting a  
warrant.

"And the charge?" demanded Choate,  
huskily.

"Perjury and false pretences," answered  
the constable.

"I suppose I have you to thank for the  
fix I am in," hissed Choate, turning to  
Laird, hoarse with passion.

"Not at all, not at all; you flatter me,"  
smiled Laird, rubbing his hands gleec-  
fully. "Permit me to introduce you to  
Detective Ryan, who has followed you from  
your own country; he is the gentle-  
man who has stopped your brilliant ca-  
reer."

"Have a cigar!" inquired Ryan, bland-  
ly, offering Choate a well-filled case.  
"The first time I met you in Canada you  
gave me a cigar and asked me where Mr.  
Felder lived."

"This is a conspiracy from which I will  
soon clear myself," Choate began—he was  
furious, but too old a head to give vent to  
his wrath in words. He glared snarling  
at Ryan, and then turning to the consta-  
ble told him to take him to the police  
station and procure him the best legal  
assistance in the town.

"I'll go with you, my bunko, and see  
that you are properly searched. Officer,  
take his arm, I will take the other, and  
we'll see that he drops nothing from his  
pockets." And away they went, Choate  
pale and silent. Bob Ryan hilarious, and  
the policeman stiff and without emotion.

Dolly had watched the scene with wide  
open, wondering eyes, not realizing how  
great a change had come over her  
fortunes, but feeling that she was relieved  
of the disgrace which Choate had sought  
to heap upon her.

Jo Felder was wild with excitement,  
and grabbed Dolly in his arms and hugged  
her and patted her head, and guessed  
"That feller's fixed now, dod-rotin'.  
Things'll git better now, Dolly." Jo seldom  
called his pet "Dolly," but when he  
did, it meant that Jo was too happy to  
express himself. Dolly looked at him in  
wonder:

"Was it all a lie he was telling us,  
Pappie?"

"Every danged word, an' now he's got  
to confess that he forged that will, or  
down he goes to penitentiary. An' when  
he owns up to that, then you kin take the  
money Lucien hez layin' in the bank an'  
not disgrace yersel' by doin' it nuther—  
and say!" whispered Jo, "it amounts to

nigh onto \$300,000. What'll mother say now! An' say! that haint the best—"

Jo's elbow received a violent nudge, and glancing around the happy man found Lawyer Laird looking warningly at him. Jo subsided at once.

"You had better return home with your daughter at once. It has no doubt been a trying time for her, and she can do no more to-day. I will see that Choate is not liberated on bail, and Ryan will do the rest. Sharp fellow that Ryan; seems to know exactly how far a criminal will go. For my part I never thought a lawyer could have been induced to swear to that rigmarole, but Choate took it, though he objected very seriously, I assure you. Yankees seem to think they are out of the world when they get into Canada, and are surprised at nothing. I wouldn't have believed it, though!"

A moment later Ryan entered and said he was ready to return to Feldersburg, and wanted a ride.

"How'll ye git the horse ye rode up here back home if ye go with us?" inquired Jo innocently.

Bob scowled at him and said a friend of his wanted it to come down later in the evening.

Dolly felt grateful to Bob, and in thanking him for the services he had rendered her expressed surprise that after capturing his man he should care to return to Feldersburg.

"I'm going back after my trunk—and partner," said Bob, with a laugh. "Don't thank me for what I have done. It is only what I am paid for."

Dolly would have given considerable to know who had sent him, but she restrained her curiosity, and with returning gaiety listened to his stories of experience. At last she could no longer conceal her anxiety to know who had sent him and what he knew of her late husband's people and a question followed.

"My dear madam," smiled Bob, "detectives never tell anything about a case until it is finished. This isn't over yet, so please excuse me for being silent."

Dolly felt hurt, but as he told her of his plans and how he intended to make Choate confess his former crime, she forgave him. As he helped her to alight from the carriage he remarked, with a profound bow:

"I congratulate you on returning to your home the richest woman in the county."

"But not the happiest," added Dolly, sadly.

"That may come later," said Bob, as he helped Jo unhitch the horse, "never despair."

After Dolly went in the house Detective Ryan had a long talk with Jo, as to their future course.

"I don't want to make any bad breaks," he said "for even now the whole scheme could be spoiled by injudicious management. And more than that, there is a great deal of this unhappy story which it would be unwise to reveal to the gossips of the village. It should be made to seem as if the whole scheme from beginning to end was intended as a blind, as far as Doctor Strange is concerned, and necessary for his proper vindication. I would advise that you persuade Mrs. Strange to move at once into her house in the village, and that can be accomplished to-morrow. Then when the doctor shows up it will seem as if he had been expected, and there will be less talk. I have promised that Strange shall have the privilege of announcing his existence, and I think things will be ready before very long."

So it came about that the pretty furniture was replaced in the doctor's house in Feldersburg. Janet washed the floors and made the windows glisten almost as brightly as did her face. With many tears Dolly saw the chairs and tables in their old places, but she thought with pleasure that she could henceforth live as Dr. Strange's widow, not as Jo Felder's daughter—not that she was ashamed of the latter, but because it seemed to make her appear ashamed of the name her baby bore. It seemed queer to Dolly that her father should be anxious to be rid of her, but he explained that he was going to give up his farm, and he wanted to see her settled at once.

Mrs. Felder, silenced by the arrest of Choate, had joined in the idea with some enthusiasm. She was anxious to rectify her error, and did it by continually bragging to Dolly of what a sensation would be caused when it became known that "there was a lady livin' in the peak-ruffed house up t' village with milliyuns an' milliyuns uv dollars."

Dolly's tears fell fast when she put Lucien's books back on the shelves, and, standing by the front window, she looked back into her room and remembered with a shiver the night of terror when Lucien left her to meet his death.

Bob managed it so that Andy should see none of these preparations.

## CHAPTER LI.

THE HORRORS—MALON KLIMMER MAKES HIS EXIT.

Before the time appointed for Andy to come up to Felder's, Detective Ryan

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knocked at Klimner's door and inquired for his client. A woman opened the door and told him that the Frenchman was upstairs helping with the sick man.

"Who's sick?" snapped Bob, pushing his way into the hall.

"Malon Klimner; he's got the 'tree-  
mers' agin'! Ain you the doctor?"

"Yes, one of them. Show me where  
they are."

The woman looked suspicious, but Bob could not be put off, and ran up the stairs as if he were at home. The sound of heavy breathing and the creaking of a bed located the sick man. Bob pushed open the door and entered unannounced.

Andy sat on the edge of the bed where Malon lay exhausted, his bloated face pallid and wet with perspiration. Sadie sat beside her brother, and the poor, faded old mother stood weeping at the foot of the couch. Malon, rolling ceaselessly from side to side, sat up and stared at Bob as he entered.

"You've come fer them cattle; I'll git  
up an' show 'em t' ye!" Malon began, as  
he threw his feet out of the bed and pre-  
pared to get up. "I've bin 'xpectin' ye  
ter a week."

Andy forced him back, and met with but little resistance. Malon seemed to forget his purpose before it was half formed. Before lying down he looked carefully under the sheets as if he feared snakes were hidden there, and then with a sudden jerk lifted the pillows and began to strike madly at the vermin which his disordered fancy revealed. Andy pushed him down on the pillows, but so real were the terrible creatures which his morbid perceptions found crawling from beneath the sheets that he shrieked in horror and threw Andy away from the bed. Fearing that he would do himself harm, Bob seized the trembling wretch and threw him down upon the mattress. Again the delirious Malon forgot what had been passing through his mind and began an incoherent conversation with some imaginary person.

"Yes ye did, ---- yer soul; you  
burnt my barns \* \* \* Daresn't say  
t' was you 'caus I murdered father \* \* \*  
Course mur'd far-r \* \* \* Nev sed  
diden mur-r far-r \* \* \* The sh ole  
man now!"

Shriek after shriek rang through the room. Andy and Bob were both holding him, and the awful spectre of his murdered father came towards him while he could not stir. His eyes, widely dilated and bloodshot, seemed to fix the distance of the spectre, and when it came within reach, a fresh series of shrieks stunned the ears of the watchers, and then came the short, gurgling gasps of

a man striving to breathe while another is compressing his throat. A tremor passed over his limbs, his eyes closed and the big drops of perspiration stood like beads on his livid face.

"He's dead!" sobbed Sadie.

"No he isn't!" barked Andy, who was counting the sick man's pulse, "he's for-  
gotten what he saw. Fortunately for  
them, men in the horrors have bad mem-  
ories."

Malon slowly opened his eyes, and looking at Bob asked him what he was laughing at. Bob denied that he was laughing, but Malon persisted and accused his mother of having insulted him. The nervous and tearful old woman assured him that her heart was breaking over his suf-  
ferings, but he called her a filthy name, and forgot his anger and began uproariously to pollute the name of maternity, and pull his feet up from the foot of the bed where he swore someone was tickling him with a straw. After a short silence he rolled to the edge of the bed, and cringing his neck, looked under to see if anyone were hidden there. Ferocious animals glared at him, and with terror-  
stricken face he rolled back in the bed and hid his head in the sheets.

While they were all watching Malon a stranger rode up to the door and threw the reins of his horse's bridle over the gate post. Unannounced he entered and went up stairs and joined those who kept watch over the case of horrors. Malon was quiet for a moment, and the stranger inquired, turning to Detective Ryan:

"Is he really sick or shall I arrest  
him?"

Bob glanced at Malon to see how the question would affect the trembling wretch, who slowly gathered himself together and sat up.

"You'd better wait till morning,"  
answered Bob, "we'll watch that he  
don't escape."

Malon was standing up now at the foot of the bed, the head of which stood beside a large Gothic window. Andy rose up to seize him, but with a despairing howl of fear, Malon sprang forward and threw himself through the window, the frame and glass crashing down with him upon a little heap of stones below. Andy ran downstairs and was the first to raise the poor, crazed drunkard from the ground. Despite a broken arm and leg and fractured ribs he was trying to escape, blood pouring from his mouth, and his disabled limbs refusing their office. The black eyes, red with the madness of terror and delirium, gleamed savagely at Andy as he and Bob carried Malon into the kitchen, out the flowing blood soon relieved the congested brain, and the

shivering hands lay quietly on the carpet lounge.

"Send for the doctor, quick!" cried Sadie.

"It's no use," stuttered Andy, "he's burst a blood vessel and cannot live half an hour—perhaps not ten minutes."

"Then let me speak to him and hev' a few words of prayer afore he goes to meet his Maker to give an account of his stewardship, and meet the judgment of the A'mighty God."

Parson Meeker had come in, and properly sought to invest the solemn occasion by religious exercises, but Malon, dying as he was, evidently did not appreciate his efforts. Parson Meeker knelt down and began to lift up his voice in prayer, and was just reaching the highest key of his eloquent gamut, recounting the generous gifts of the dying man to the church, when Malon, choking with blood, looked at Andy and then at the kneeling suppliant, and muttered: "Take the damn thing out."

Andy hesitated; he could hardly believe his senses; could it be possible for a dying man to be so profane? While he hesitated, Malon spat a mouthful of blood on the hands of the parson, and tried with failing strength to eject a mouthful into the face which, with closed eyes and many lines of self-abasement, was turned up ceilingward.

"Take 'im away," again gasped Malon, and Bob led the preacher away from the bedside.

The officer, who had ridden down from the town to arrest Malon Klimmer, asked him to confess his knowledge of his father's murder, and assured him that death would soon make it impossible.

"I killed him. I didn't—inten'to—but after—I struck—I'm—once—couldn't—stop. He saw me and I daren't—lettin' live—I'm sorry now—I wan't—see—Dolly Felder!—lover!—Teiler!—I—sed—lover—lassing—lass' bre'f—sed lov'er!"

The red gleam was gone from the heavy black eyes, the smouldering fire was quenched, and the only love that the heart of Malon Klimmer ever knew, softened, with the passing gleam of a tender smile, the face that was stiffening in death.

The blood ceased to flow from the half-open mouth; the pulse that beat feebly beneath the pressure of Lame Andy's finger, stopped; Malon Klimmer was dead.

The awful silence which follows a knowledge that death has come, held the little group, broken only by the sobbing of Malon's heartbroken mother and sister. Rene Whitefoot ran in, excited, breathless, as if the herald of evil tidings or some awful warning. The question died on her

lips when she pushed her way into the room, and saw Malon lying dead on the bright-colored lounge in the kitchen. Behind her but a few paces came Jonas Whitefoot, prepared to do something desperate. The loaded pistol in his pocket was never drawn; death had settled his claim for vengeance.

No one ever forgot that scene. Sadie and her mother, still dwelling in the old house, see it often, and its shadow frightens away the lovers which the soft-hearted, lonely Sadie well deserves. In a far western state Rene Whitefoot and her aged husband look at each other across their loveless table, and the ghastly face of Malon Klimmer's corpse chills even the kindness that would come from the habit of dwelling together. Often when she wakes in the night and sees that shrivelled face on the pillow beside her, she would like to strangle poor old Jonas, who is more dictatorial, "business-like," and annoying every day, rarely forgetting to remind her of her past; but the burning barns and the dead face recall the scenes of crime, and she decides that she must wait till Jonas dies. And it is for this she longs.

### CHAPTER LII.

#### AN UNWILLING REPARATION.

The same night that Malon Klimmer confessed to the murder of his father Andy and Detective Ryan rode to the county town to demand a confession from Choate. Early next morning they visited his cell, Andy still disguised as a tramp.

He was preparing his defence and expecting his legal adviser.

"You were over smart, my dear fellow," he sneered, as Bob entered. "The conspiracy is so manifest that I will be liberated at once."

"Is that so?" Bob asked, as he seated himself on the iron bedstead beside the prisoner. "Of course you're sure, or you wouldn't give a legal opinion so positively. But how about the perjury, and false pretences, and forgery, etc.?"

"There has been none! The papers I presented are correct, and I know that your affidavit that I had committed perjury must have been made without a knowledge of the circumstances, as no one ever saw them before I submitted them papers to Felder and his daughter."

"You're mighty right. No one ever saw them, not even the people who are supposed to have made them, nor the parties who signed them," sneered Bob. "Andy, go and get shaved and come back as soon as you get a decent suit of clothes on."

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Detective, that I have wired to the mayor of my city; to the judge and leaders of the bar, and they have responded that I am in every way worthy of credence. You will be forced to establish your case in one particular, or else I cannot be held, and you must prove that I knew the documents were fraudulent before you can convict me of having done anything wrong. Now, I don't know who set you onto this trail, but it's a dead man's case any way, and you can't make as much money standing in with any one as you can with me. Why not drop your brief and come in with me? It will be worth \$50,000 to you and no chances worth speaking of. You can go and tell Felder and his pretty daughter that you were deceived and make them square up. You know the facts and can make me do the decent thing, and there is no need of you being scared or squeamish. What say you?"

"That you are the most dyed-in-the-wool scoundrel I ever met!" retorted Bob, with an admiring laugh.

"Perhaps; but how does the scheme strike you?"

"Not at all," answered Bob grimly. "For these reasons, that detective as I am, I always do a square business; that Mrs. Strange cannot be fooled with a false statement of her husband's affairs, that you have sewed yourself up so that salt-petre won't save you, and last but not least, it is not in my power to save you."

"Why?" exclaimed Choate.

"Because the evidence is all against you! There is only one way you can get out of this snare, and that is by confessing that you forged the will which was accepted by the probate judge."

"I'll never do that!" roared Choate, springing from his seat excitedly. "Do you suppose I intend going to state prison at home in order to get out of a scrape abroad?"

Bob Ryan made no answer. For a moment he sat looking at the thin-lipped, blonde-haired lawyer, as if estimating his strength. "You'll never go back to your home, Mr. Choate," exclaimed the detective, reflectively. "You are going to seek new scenes and fresh pastures—perhaps afar. I am not a fortune teller, but still I'm prepared to wager that inside of twelve hours you will be striking vigorously out for one of the South American republics which has no extradition treaty with Canada or the United States."

The confident tone of the detective annoyed and alarmed Choate. "I have done nothing either wrong or criminal. I am ready for my trial, and I'll show you who is weak in this case. You needn't suppose I started on this enterprise without care-

ful thought. If I fail it will be because you obtain proof that I can't. You have no other hope. Every name on those affidavits is genuine, and if you confute them you will have to fight people who are much more afraid of a perjury suit than I am!"

"That may be all true, and still you may be away off!" smiled Bob, with complete assurance. "Now, I know of one solitary witness who will knock you clear out of court."

"Who is he?" sneered Choate.

"Lucien Melroy Strange!" cried Bob, and the owner of the name stalked into the cell and stood before the detective and his brother-in-law.

"Shall I introduce him? Not necessary, eh? Thought maybe you'd met before; in fact I knew you had, the night when you first came to Feldersburg, the gentleman who stands before you refused to take one of your cigars. Happy occasion, isn't it? Always so glad to be present at these charming little family reunions." Bob sat swinging his legs while he jeered at Choate, who stood dumbfounded and white as a ghost staring at Lucien.

Lucien, who could hardly keep his hands off the thin-lipped lawyer who had caused all his woes, moved a step closer to his brother-in-law, his fist clenched, and his stern, dark face scowling fiercely at the scoundrel before him. Choate completely lost his self-possession and in a spasm of abject fear begged the detective to prevent Lucien from attacking him.

"Don't touch the reptile!" cried Bob. "Let's get down to business and settle on what's to be done with this sweet-scented brother-in-law of yours."

"I would like to have him to myself for ten minutes and I'd settle with him so it would stay settled!" hissed Lucien, whose passion was quickly gaining the upper hand of his judgment.

"See here," the detective said, as he pushed Lucien into a chair, "it would show neither courage nor good judgment to assault a prisoner. Behave yourself for a few moments more and I will be through with you."

Lucien subsided, but Choate, thoroughly frightened, stood trembling in the most remote corner of the cell.

"Now," continued Bob, turning to the lawyer, "you must make a clean breast of that old deal when you forged the will and ruined the reputation of the doctor here. Nothing else will satisfy him, and if you refuse you will spend the next ten years in a Canadian prison as sure as your name is Choate. Confess your original forgery and remove the stain from this man's life and you can go free. Choose!"

"I'll go to prison rather than own up! What good'll it do me to be free and too poor to get out of the country. I gave up the last cash I had to that scoundrel Laird—that \$15,000 was the last of my wife's share of the estate, and I may just as well go down for a couple of years if you can send me there, without somebody else being hung for killing Peter Klimmer." As he finished he looked malevolently at his brother-in-law, who in return laughed viciously and explained that the murder had already been cleared up.

"Stop making faces at one another!" snapped Bob. "You are a fool if you let the law have its fling with you. Here in Canada you will have no chance of mercy, and the judges take pride in sending a man down for life. If you are too poor to skip the country, I'll give you that fifteen thousand dollar check, and with that you can get so far away from here that you can start afresh."

"And you'll agree not to prosecute?" cried Choate.

"Yes, we'll agree to let you away as soon as you make your confession."

"Then it's a go! Send for a magistrate and I'll own up to the whole snap. My wife never gave me a minute's peace till she heard Lucien was dead, and now she'll be satisfied." Choate seemed glad to have the thing off his mind, and for fifteen thousand dollars in his desperate straits he was willing to sacrifice considerable.

In half an hour the confession was signed, Choate was free, and Bob Ryan was bidding farewell to Lucien.

"Yes, my dear fellow; five thousand dollars will pay me well, considering the reputation I'll gain from having worked an old trail to such a fine finish. But I hope you will be cured of your jealousy of your wife and live happily after the lesson you've had. She's the noblest woman I ever knew and deserves to have a husband's complete confidence. Excuse me for speaking of this. I know your story and have seen much of such cases. You were entirely wrong. If you want to be happy, banish suspicion entirely and trust your wife as you should your God, then you'll see happy days. Good-bye, old fellow."

Lucien pressed his friend's hand, and in a husky whisper vowed that never again would his jealousy offend his sweet wife. The train pulled out from the station, and Doctor Strange slowly walked back to his hotel. Dixie, who had been ridden to town by the detective, stood saddled before the door, and as he sprang onto her back and galloped homeward he thought of the awful night when he rode away from love and

home, and said good-bye to happiness for so many years. As he sped swiftly along he met many old acquaintances who stopped, open mouthed, to stare at the man who looked so like Dr. Strange. Time had changed him but little. His stern, clean shaven face was as smileless as of yore, and if he had grown heavier and more grand in his proportions, he was still the graceful athlete of old.

The loungers in front of the store stared at him as he rode past. He said "Pleasant day?" and they looked at one another and with one accord took out their chewing tobacco, gazed at the horse-man, then at one another, took a chew, went back in the store, sat down and swore that it was the dangdest funniest thing that ever happened therabouts.

Jo Felder stood near the gate when Lucien rode up and threw his reins over a picket of the fence and ran to the door of his home, where Dolly, not yet realizing the happiness in store for her, stood watching the home-coming of her husband as one would witness the return of someone from the grave.

There was a shriek, and Dolly fell fainting into Lucien's arms. Mrs. Felder was busy restoring her to consciousness, and when, with a gasp and wide-opening eyes, the poor little sweetheart awoke to joy again, Lucien was kissing the pale lips and begging her to forgive his madness and distrust. The shapely arms, from which the muslin sleeves fell back, were thrown around Lucien's neck, and the soft, pansy eyes, wet with tears and luminous with a joy that no tongue could express, bade him come back to the heart that never gave him up.

"At last! At last!" cried Dolly.

"Forever, till death do us part!" responded Lucien, looking lovingly into the pure face turned up to his.

"Thank God!" sobbed poor Jo as his wife pulled his sleeve and led him away from the door, which she carefully closed behind her, for some of the neighbors had begun to gather and were witnesses of the reunion of husband and wife. Jo, blind with tears of joy, stumbled away, and beneath a tree sat down, and with clasped hands and a full heart gave thanks to God, and pledged the rest of his days to the service of the Heavenly Father who through many shadows had been so kind to him.

Mrs. Felder, sitting on the doorstep, twirled her fingers nervously, and looking helplessly at a neighbor woman who was leaning over the gate, vowed it was "the ter'blest, queerest git up that she ever seed!"

She could stand it no longer, and opened the door. There stood Lucien with Dolly

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his shoulders, asking him where he'd  
been—"Aw'e time?" Lucien answered  
nothin', but kissed the baby lips, and  
again and again kissed his wife, who  
clung to him, only half believing that  
this joy was not a dream which would  
pass away in a tearful and lonely awaken-  
ing.

\* \* \* \* \*

All this was not long ago, and the future  
holds its own secrets. Dolly and Lucien  
have been in New York and come back  
again with riches enough to gratify  
Dolly's prophecy "that some day they'd  
be able to go everywhere and see every-  
thing." Feildersburg never asked ques-  
tions, but, overawed by Doctor Strange's  
wealth, received him back as if he had  
never been absent.

Had you stood on the dusty road that  
winds through Feildersburg the night after  
Dolly and Lucien returned, you would  
have seen a happy little party on the

doorstep and heard Mrs. Felder begging  
Dolly not to live away from her mother,  
or she would have no one to see her  
through her "troubles."

Dolly laughed and said her "troubles"  
ot every kind were past.

"You can't tell, Dolly. I've heered  
lots on 'em say the same, an' I've bin  
helpin' 'em through agin afore long.  
No one can't tell nuthin' any more after  
this, and the way things hez turned out,  
kin they, Joel?"

"No, Hanner, we can't, but the Lord's  
bin ter'ble good to us after all, though  
we've bin so keerless of Him, an' we kin  
reckon it'll be pertv nign right."

While they were talking Dolly's fair  
hands held up the little painted board  
while Lucien fastened it in it's old place  
and now if you ever go that way you will  
see on the door of the new house with  
the pretty furniture the same blue sign  
with gilt letters, "Dr. Strange, Physician  
and Surgeon."

#### THE END.

NOTE—This edition of "Dolly" is printed from the original stereoty whole plates made  
each week for THE TORONTO NEWS, where the story first appeared as a serial. For  
this reason the author has been unable to make a much needed revision of some of  
the chapters, the weaknesses of which are those incident to serials that are forced to  
hold the interest each week.

THE AUTHOR.